Gender, Work and Development in Northwest Pakistan

Working Environments of Pakistani Female Development Practitioners

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Summary

Even though women in Pakistan have attracted some interest among researchers and policymakers, they are often represented as oppressed and victimised members of a highly patriarchal society. What is lacking are nuanced approaches that recognise Pakistani women as active and diverse agents without neglecting the societal structures that limit their agency. This research thus aims to provide more detailed representations of Pakistani women. The study argues that a research perspective based on poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial concepts of power, knowledge and subjects is helpful for analysing links between Pakistani women's individual experiences and their implication in diverse social relations of power. Against this background, this study adopts just this kind of research perspective to explore how Pakistani female development practitioners working in Government of Pakistan projects in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province experience and negotiate their work environment, particularly in respect to gendered relations of power.

The four research papers present insights into this research problem. Each of the four papers discusses a specific aspect: the relations between women and non-domestic work as constituted through state discourses (Paper I); the complex field realities in which Pakistani development practitioners work (Paper II); the labour market for social organisers – a type of development practitioner – in northwest Pakistan and its gendered nature (Paper III); and the challenges female development practitioners face in their work environment and the coping strategies they develop (Paper IV). Each of the papers is based on an individual set of primary and/or secondary data such as job announcements, observations and people's narratives. Primary data was generated through qualitative methodologies between 2006 and 2008 during several periods of fieldwork in Pakistan.

The research identifies the development sector as a complex and often contested work environment. Many local residents perceive 'development' as an instrument of the 'West' for pursuing its interests, and they are thus generally wary of development practitioners and organisations. A rising number of verbal and physical attacks in the late 2000s have affected the work of many development practitioners. Besides the resistance to development as a 'Western' ideology, there is also a widespread need for and interest in material benefits, which complicates development practitioners' work further. When social organisers go to communities, they are supposed to select and support villages, communities and individuals that need developing. In a village, however, there are usually different voices that claim the right to development. The findings of the present study show that villagers variably draw on social categories such as development status, clan membership or gender to convince (potential) development practitioners of their eligibility for material benefits. Furthermore, an analysis of job announcement for social organisers shows that job qualifications are high (e.g. for language skills and willingness to work in a mixed-gender working environment) and the rewards (e.g. wages and social recognition) are low. For women in particular, it is difficult to present the requisite skills, since social values and norms regarding gender discriminate against women in areas such as access to information, ability to travel, and eligibility for employment in general.

The study further elaborates on the fact that the development sector has become a growing work opportunity for (mainly middle class) Pakistani women. This is because of a growing demand for well-educated female employees in this sector, but also because of a growing dependency of many middle-class families on women's income. While the female participation rate in the Pakistani labour force is generally low (21.7% in 2010/11), there have always been women in formal employment, although this has often been in traditional female occupations such as teaching and nursing. The study's findings suggest that

Pakistani women have been kept out of non-domestic work through social norms and values that were, for example, established in laws, directives and speeches by state representatives such as Zia ul-Haq. Even today, women who take up a job as development practitioners need to position themselves in relation to these norms and values. The study shows that female development practitioners therefore develop strategies to establish themselves as good Muslim women and good development workers. For example they establish fictive kinship relations with their male team colleagues in order to make the latter responsible for their well-being and modesty. Another strategy is to locate women's room in the back part of the office in order to shield female employees from men's gazes.

A conclusion based on this study's empirical findings is that, in the work environments of development practitioners, competing discourses on gender relations and development complicate working women's everyday lives, but also provide them with an opportunity to reconcile specific gender norms with their labour market engagements. Pakistani women's lives are made harder by the fact that prevalent gender relations generally restrict their participation in formal labour markets (even though formal structural constraints on women's employment have been substantially reduced). However, women have to negotiate gender relations to participate in formal employment relations, such as in the development sector. Since engaging in the labour market is *per se* highly unusual behaviour for many Pakistani women, Pakistani women's involvement in the market economy often increases both men's and women's options to negotiate gender relations, either consciously or unconsciously.

The study contributes to research in three ways. First, it makes a conceptual contribution to debates on gender, work and development by applying poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial methodologies to data analysis and representation, and this is fairly rare for empirical research in Pakistan and in this research field. Second, it contributes empirically to academic debates about gender and work by rendering professional Pakistani women visible, especially the complexities, ambivalences and multilayered nature of their working lives in the development sector. Third, the study makes an empirical contribution to debates on development interventions and how they operate on the ground in the context of Pakistan by discussing the impact of (women's) work environments on development interventions.

Zusammenfassung

Obwohl sich WissenschafterInnen und PraktikerInnen vermehrt für pakistanische Frauen interessieren, werden diese oft einseitig als Opfer und Unterdrückte patriarchaler Strukturen dargestellt. Es mangelt an Studien, die pakistanische Frauen als aktive und facettenreiche Akteurinnen beschreiben, ohne dabei soziale Strukturen zu vernachlässigen, welche ihre Handlungsspielräume eingrenzen. Aus diesem Grund hat sich die vorliegende Studie zum Ziel gesetzt, solchen einseitigen und essentialisierenden Darstellungen mit einer nuancierten Schilderung pakistanischer Frauen entgegenzuwirken. Eine Forschungsperspektive, welche sich auf poststrukturalistische, feministische und postkoloniale Konzeptualisierungen von Macht, Wissen und Subjekte beruft, soll helfen, individuelle Erfahrungen der Frauen im Rahmen ihrer Einbindung in diverse soziale Machtgefüge zu analysieren. Die vorliegende Studie wendet eine solche Forschungsperspektive an, um zu untersuchen, wie pakistanische Frauen, die in Entwicklungsprojekten des pakistanischen Staates arbeiten, ihren Arbeitskontext erleben und damit umgehen. Ein spezifisches Augenmerk wird dabei auf Geschlechterverhältnisse gelegt.

Die Erkenntnisse aus dieser Studie werden in vier wissenschaftlichen Artikeln präsentiert, wobei sich jeder der vier Artikel mit einem spezifischen Aspekt der oben genannten Problemstellung beschäftigt. Artikel 1 untersucht das Verhältnis zwischen Frauen und nicht-häuslicher Arbeit und fragt, wie Staatsdiskurse dieses Verhältnis konstruieren. Artikel 2 setzt sich mit den komplexen Feldrealitäten auseinander, welche pakistanische Entwicklungshelfende bei ihrer Arbeit antreffen. Artikel 3 diskutiert den Arbeitsmarkt für ‚Social Organisers' – Angestellte, die hauptsächlich für die Gruppenbildung in Dörfern zuständig sind – und die geschlechtsspezifische Funktionsweise dieses Arbeitsmarktes. Artikel 4 widmet sich den Herausforderungen, welche weibliche ‚Social Organisers' in ihrem Arbeitskontext erfahren, sowie mit den Bewältigungsstrategien, die sie anwenden. Jeder Artikel bezieht sich auf einen spezifischen Korpus an Primär- und/oder Sekundärdaten, bestehend z.B. aus Beobachtungen, Erzählungen und Stellenausschreibungen. Die Primärdaten wurden mit qualitativen Methoden während mehreren Aufenthalten in Pakistan zwischen 2006 und 2008 generiert.

Der pakistanische Entwicklungssektor erweist sich als komplexer und umstrittener Arbeitskontext. Viele lokale Akteure sind generell skeptisch und zurückhaltend gegenüber Organisationen und Personal aus dem Entwicklungsbereich, weil sie ‚Entwicklung' als ein Instrument verstehen, welches ‚der Westen' zur Durchsetzung seiner Interessen benutzt. Seit Ende der 2000er Jahren hat die verbale und physische Gewalt gegenüber Entwicklungshelfenden zugenommen, wodurch diese vermehrt in ihrer Arbeit beeinträchtigt werden. Nebst der Ablehnung von ‚Entwicklung' im Sinne einer westlichen Ideologie gibt es aber auch ein weitverbreitetes Bedürfnis nach und Interesse an materiellen Gütern, welche durch Entwicklungsprojekte angeboten werden. Eine Hauptaufgabe der ‚Social Organisers' ist es, diejenigen Dörfer, Gruppen und Individuen zu identifizieren und fördern, die Hilfe brauchen. In einem Dorf gibt es jedoch meist verschiedene Stimmen, die ihr Recht auf Entwicklung geltend machen, was die Arbeit von Entwicklungsperson nicht weniger schwierig macht. Erkenntnisse aus der vorliegenden Forschung zeigen, dass sich Dorfbewohnerinnen und -bewohner auf verschiedene soziale Kategorien, (z.B. auf den Entwicklungsstand, die Zugehörigkeit zu einer bestimmten Herkunftsgruppe oder das Geschlecht) beziehen, um (potentielle) Entwicklungshelfenden von ihrer Anspruchsberechtigung zu überzeugen. Zudem zeigt eine Analyse von Stellenausschreibungen, dass die Qualifikationen, die von Arbeitnehmenden gefordert werden, sehr hoch sind (z.B. in Bezug auf Sprachkenntnisse und der Bereitschaft, in einem gemischtgeschlechtlichen Umfeld zu arbeiten) und die Gegenleistungen sehr gering (z.B. die Entlohnung und das soziale Ansehen). Speziell für Frauen ist es schwierig, die geforderten Fähigkeiten zu erfüllen, weil sie in verschiedenen Bereichen wie Mobilität, Zugang zu Information und

Berechtigung zur Erwerbstätigkeit aufgrund sozialer Werte und Normen stärker eingeschränkt sind als Männer.

Die Studie weist des Weiteren darauf hin, dass der Entwicklungssektor als formeller Beschäftigungskontext zunehmend attraktiv wird für pakistanischen Frauen aus der Mittelschicht. Das liegt einerseits daran, dass in diesem Sektor ein Bedarf an gut gebildeten Arbeitnehmerinnen besteht, andererseits, dass viele Mittelschichtsfamilien zunehmend auf ein Einkommen der weiblichen Familienmitglieder angewiesen sind. Obwohl die Erwerbstätigenquote von pakistanischen Frauen generell tief ist (21.7% in 2010/11), hat es schon immer Frauen gegeben, die ein formelles Anstellungsverhältnis eingegangen sind. Oft haben diese Frauen jedoch in traditionell weiblichen Berufen, wie z.B. als Lehrerinnen oder Krankenpflegerinnen, gearbeitet. Die Resultate der vorliegenden Studie deuten an, dass soziale Werte und Normen – welche z.B. durch staatliche Gesetze, Weisungen und Staatsreden konstituiert worden sind – pakistanische Frauen in der Vergangenheit von nicht-häuslichen Tätigkeiten abgehalten wurden (abgesehen von der Arbeit in der Landwirtschaft. Auch heutzutage müssen sich Frauen, die eine Stelle im Entwicklungssektor antreten wollen, gegenüber solchen Werten und Normen positionieren. Die Studie zeigt in diesem Zusammenhang auf, wie Frauen Strategien entwickeln, die sie als gute Musliminnen, aber auch als gute Entwicklungshelferinnen etablieren. So entwickeln sie beispielsweise fiktive Verwandtschaftsbeziehungen mit ihren Arbeitskollegen, um diese für ihr Wohlbefinden und einen sittsamen Umgang im Arbeitsalltag verantwortlich zu machen. Eine andere Strategie von Arbeitnehmerinnen besteht darin, im hinteren Teil der Büroräumlichkeiten zu arbeiten, um so vor den Blicken fremder Männer geschützt zu sein.

Insgesamt deuten die vorliegenden Resultate darauf hin, dass konkurrierende Diskurse zu Geschlecht und Entwicklung das Alltagsleben der Frauen zwar oftmals erschweren, aber auch eine Möglichkeit bieten, Geschlechternormen neu zu verhandeln und eine Beschäftigung im formellen Arbeitsmarkt zu ermöglichen. Der Alltag der pakistanischen Frauen wird erschwert, weil die gängige Geschlechterordnung in vielen Fällen unvorteilhaft ist für Frauen, die erwerbstätig sein wollen. Wollen Frauen einer formellen Arbeit nachgehen, müssen sie ein Geschlechterverhältnis aushandeln, das ihnen ein formelles Beschäftigungsverhältnis z.B. im Entwicklungssektor erlaubt. Da eine formelle Erwerbstätigkeit ein ungewöhnliches Verhalten für viele pakistanische Frauen darstellt, eröffnet eine solche Tätigkeit aber auch neue Möglichkeiten (für Frauen und Männer), um Geschlechterverhältnisse neu auszuhandeln, geschehe dies bewusst oder unbewusst.

Die vorliegende Studie leistet verschiedene Beiträge: Erstens macht sie einen konzeptuellen Beitrag zu wissenschaftlichen Debatten rund um Geschlecht, Arbeit und Entwicklung, indem sie poststrukturalistische, feministische und postkoloniale Methodologien zur Auswertung und Präsentation der Daten verwendet. Ein solcher Zugang wurde bisher selten für empirische Forschungsprojekte in Pakistan angewendet. Zweitens leistet die Studie einen empirischen Beitrag zur Debatte um Geschlecht und Arbeit, indem sie berufstätige pakistanische Frauen im Entwicklungssektor sichtbar macht, insbesondere die Komplexitäten, Ambivalenzen und Vielschichtigkeiten ihres Arbeitslebens. Drittens trägt sie empirisch zu Debatten um Entwicklungsinterventionen und deren Umsetzung in der Praxis bei indem sie aufzeigt, wie Arbeitskontexte die Umsetzung von Entwicklungsinterventionen in einen lokalen Kontext in Pakistan beeinflussen.

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Part I – Overview

1 Introduction: Setting the stage

> *In rural areas, the women face many problems and their men don't allow them outside of the home. But now there is a lot of change; they now have education and are going out of the home. Inside the house they do lots and lots of work. They will not go out of the house, but will look after the animals, elders, and children inside the house. But we started giving training in this project. We give them awareness campaign, health, education.*
> (Bashira, female development practitioner, 07.07.2008)

This is a study about an intersection of gender, work and development that rarely features in academic literature. It is about 'Third World women'[1] who work as development practitioners in their own country and the impact of their work context on their working lives and the development interventions they are part of. Development practitioners are embedded in specific local contexts, and it is crucial to consider this embedding if we want to understand how 'development' works in these contexts. The women at the heart of this research are Pakistani citizens who have completed a Bachelor's or Master's degree at a Pakistani university and now work as professionals in the rural development sector – a sector that is highly contested, as will be shown in the papers. They work in development projects that are implemented by the federal and/or provincial government. Most of them work as social organisers, which means that they are supposed to identify villages where development projects should be implemented and to link villagers with the relevant project (see **Paper III**). These social organisers are responsible for tasks such as setting up community organisations in the selected villages, registering these organisations with a development project, opening a bank account for them, and visiting villagers from time to time in order to forward information from the villagers to more senior project staff and vice versa. They usually do not implement specific interventions such as skills training courses and awareness-raising campaigns.

These Pakistani women development practitioners are confronted with different, often conflicting expectations towards them and their multiple roles, for example, as 'good' Muslim women who comply with certain gender norms, but also as 'good' development workers who comply with certain professional norms. During my field research in Pakistan, I was intrigued by the complex social settings they are embedded in and by the ways they handle the multitude of intersecting categories that constitute their identities. While categories such as class, religion, ethnicity, age, 'development'[2] and many more are relevant, *gender* is one of the most challenging categories Pakistani women development practitioners have to juggle with in their everyday activities. The above quotation illustrates the relevance of gender to their work contexts.

In what follows, I argue that poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial conceptualisations of power, knowledge and subjects provide a useful research perspective from which to shed light on the links between Pakistani women's *individual experiences* of specific work contexts and these women's *implication in diverse social relations of power*. From this research perspective I explore *how Pakistani female development practitioners who work in projects of the Government of Pakistan experience and negotiate their work context, particularly in respect to gendered relations of power*. The insights are presented in four academic papers (see **Part II**). Each

[1] By this term, I consciously allude to Mohanty's critique (1988) of the homogenisation of 'Third World women', especially by Western feminists. Through this study, I hope to contribute to the disruption of such monolithic subject constructions that turn 'Third World women' into objects of development.
[2] I will elaborate in **Paper II** how people variably draw on 'development' as part of their identities.

of the papers asks a specific research question (see **Section 1.4**) and discusses a different aspect of the research problem (see **Chapter 5** for a summary of each paper).

Within **Part I** – an overview of the thesis – **Chapter 1** lays the groundwork for understanding the social and scientific relevance of the study by introducing the three key themes – gender, work and development – and related debates. It includes the rationale for the specific research questions and research aims. **Chapter 2** describes the institutional framework within which this research took place and outlines the geographical and political context of the field research. **Chapter 3** introduces the reader to the study's conceptual foundations. **Chapter 4** describes the methodology and methods. **Chapter 5** introduces each paper with a summary of its aims and results. **Chapter 6** collates the papers' results, highlights their contributions and draws conclusions. **Part II** contains the four academic papers.

1.1 Gender relations in Pakistan and their role in development interventions

Gender relations are a central organising principle of Pakistani society, regulating the spaces (for example, acceptable work contexts) and social roles deemed acceptable for men and women. In this study, gender relations are understood as a complex, culturally and historically specific social system in reference to the social and political constructions of difference between 'women' and 'men' and the production of hierarchies of their social worth (Cook, 2007; Sydie, 2006; Lutz & Wenning, 2001; Agarwal, 1997:1-2). In this way, gender relations also regulate what is appropriate for women and men in a given context and at a certain time. If something is gendered, this means that there are different social norms for women and men, and what is associated with men and masculinity is often valued higher than what is associated with women and femininity (Cook, 2007:1; Sydie, 2006; Agarwal, 1997:10-12). As in other Muslim countries, gender relations in Pakistan are strongly sexualised and regulated through the institution of *purdah*[3] (Syed, 2008b; Besio, 2006; Mirza, 2002; Pastner, 1974; Papanek, 1973). Based on *purdah*, 'separate worlds' for women and men are created, a practice that is often referred to as gender segregation and female seclusion (Pastner, 1974; Papanek, 1973). As a result, the private sphere and reproductive work have largely been normalised as women's spaces, while the public sphere and productive work are considered to be male (Shahbaz et al, 2010; Siegmann & Sadaf, 2006; Besio, 2006; Gratz, 1998; Göhlen, 1998; Rahman, 1987; **Paper I**). Many Pakistani women have thus been restricted through social norms to reproductive and socialising functions within the family (Cook, 2001). As a consequence, Pakistan ranks as one of the five countries with the lowest female labour force participation rates worldwide in the World Development Report 2012 (World Bank, 2011:199).

Since in many cases, women in Pakistan are seen as an embodiment of their family's honour (Mirza, 2002; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Pastner, 1974; Papanek, 1973), they are – more than men – subject to seclusion in space and time and, as a consequence, also to varying restrictions on their activities (Shaheed, 2009, 2002; CEDAW, 2007; Besio, 2006; Weiss, 1998; Gratz, 1998). This is reflected in the Global Gender Gap Index 2010 ranking (Hausmann et al, 2010), in which Pakistan is third from bottom, i.e. 132nd out of 134, above only Chad (133) and Yemen (134). The ranking implies that women in Pakistan face far greater challenges than men to access resources and opportunities and also that these gender-based disparities are very high compared with other countries. For example, the Global Gender Gap Index points out that women in Pakistan have much lower literacy rates, worse access to health care and occupy fewer ministerial positions than men. The United Nations Development Programme estimates

[3] The institution of *purdah* ('curtain') is a way of dealing with gender order at a societal level by separating the sexes, usually through physical segregation and the covering of the (woman's) body (Papanek, 1973). It is related to Islamic values and designates a broad set of behavioural patterns rather than a fixed set of rules (Mirza, 2002).

that 6.1 million women were missing in Pakistan in 2007 as a result of discriminatory treatment in access to health and nutrition or because they were never born (UNDP, 2010:42). The male-female sex ratio at birth was 1.05 in 2000-2005, indicating the preference for male children (UNDP, 2010:207)[4]. Of particular importance to this thesis is the considerable gender gap in labour force participation[5]; the official labour force participation rate for women was only 21.7% compared with 68.7% for men in 2010/2011 (GoP, 2011a:19).

According to international and national development agencies and donors[6], gender-based disparities are a major impediment to social change in Pakistan and must therefore be tackled through development interventions. Commenting on Pakistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II, which was finalised in 2010, the World Bank states that the "[poverty reduction] *strategy also recognizes that gender disparities represent a critical constraint to achieving Pakistan's development objectives*" (World Bank, 2010:15). In their development policies, national and international organisations point to the fact that gender inequalities are reflected in lower rates of school enrolment, labour force participation and political representation for women than for men (UN, 2010a; GoP, 2009b; NRSP, 2009; UNDP, 2008; ADB, 2003:3; UN, 2002:9; World Bank, 2001; ADB, 2000). As a result, policies and interventions aimed at increasing girl's school enrolment and women's participation in the labour market are designed to help advance development. The institutionalisation of a gender perspective in politics and development practice has become known as 'gender mainstreaming'. Currently, this approach is most prominently reflected in the United Nation's Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3: "Promote gender equality and empower women" (UN, 2010b). Not surprisingly, the MDG Monitor (in accordance with national government reporting) states that goal number 3 is "off track" for Pakistan (MDG Monitor, 2011).

While donors' development foci suggest that gender inequality in Pakistan is significant, statistics and indices such as the Gender-related Development Index (UNDP, 2010) and the Global Gender Gap Index (Hausmann et. al, 2010:14-15) also indicate that there is slow success at reducing these inequalities. I therefore conclude that there is a sustained need to engage critically with the diverse links between gender and development.

1.2 Development work as a new occupational field for Pakistani women

Even though female labour force participation rates are low in Pakistan and gender norms tend to hinder women from participating in formal employment relations, some women have actually taken up formal employment. Educated women have traditionally taken up employment in 'modern', i.e. non-agricultural occupations wherever the gender-segregated societal structure required women professionals (Mirza, 2002; Amos-Wilson, 1999; Papanek, 1971; Weiss, 1984). Examples for such modern and socially relatively well-accepted occupations are female teachers to teach girls (Pardhan, 2009; Sales, 1999) and female doctors and nurses to provide medical care for women (Khan, 2011, 2008; Mumtaz et al, 2003; French et al, 1994).

Since the 1980s, the development sector has become an additional area in which Pakistani women are hired in formal work contexts outside their homes, for example as social organisers. Social organisation (also called community organisation or social mobilisation) emerged as a formal occupation for men and women in Pakistan in the 1980s (Jan & Jan, 2000:27-33). The rationale behind this new form of activism

[4] See Table 1 for sex ratios for each district.

[5] In the Pakistan's official Labour Force Survey (LFS), the concept of 'labour force' comprises all persons ten years of age and above who are employed or unemployed (GoP, 2011a:6).

[6] The main donors in Pakistan are the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank [ADB], the IMF and USAID.

was at least twofold. First, some parts of society were eager to bring change to Pakistan. Marginalised individuals (e.g. women) and rural communities were to be empowered by organising them as groups of citizens capable of changing the discriminating structures affecting their everyday life (Gittell & Vidal, 1999). Second, previous state-led rural development in Pakistan had thus far focused merely on technical interventions and was not likely to succeed in the future without social change on the ground, i.e. in villages or communities. In Pakistan, Shoaib Sultan Khan and Akhter Hameed Khan, leaders of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme and the Orangi Pilot Project, were two of the earliest and most important promoters and pioneers of social organisation and helped to fundamentally transform Pakistan's approach to rural development (Jan & Jan, 2000; Rasmussen et al., 2007). Due to these reasons, an increasing number of social organisers have been called on to mediate between projects and local communities. International donors' development agendas have further consolidated the occupational field of social organisation. With their discourse of participatory, community-driven, and sustainable development, international donors have pressurised the people who formulate development policies and projects into integrating social aspects and a focus on local people in their proposals (Oakley, 1991; Rauch, 2009).

The development sector has also become an occupational field for Pakistani women due to international policies that have increasingly targeted women as beneficiaries of development interventions. In development practice, the 'Women in Development' (WID) approach of the 1970s focused on the "*integration of women into global processes of economic, political and social growth and change*" (Rathgeber, 1990:489). This approach was grounded in modernisation theory, and the idea was that women's integration into development (mainly into labour markets) would finally result in women's empowerment. In the second half of the 1970s, the 'Women and Development' (WAD) approach emerged as a response to WID, arguing that women have always been important economic actors (Rathgeber, 1990). Drawing at least partly on dependence theory, it shifted the focus from strategies for women's integration into development towards the diverse relationships between women and development (Rathgeber, 1990). Gender concepts, though they were developed in 1970s feminist theory (Villa, 2008a), were only incorporated into mainstream development practice from the 1990s onwards (see for example ADB, 2003; Sarraf, 2003; World Bank, 1995a, 1995b). In the 1990s, the 'Gender and Development' (GAD) approach marked a clear conceptual shift away from an emphasis on women towards a focus on the power-laden relations between men and women and its associated reproduction of the unequal status quo (Bieri, 2006, Moser, 1993, 1989; Razavi & Miller, 1995). It critically examined the assumption made by former approaches that economic change would lead to women's empowerment. In countries around the world, 'gender' has been prominently integrated into development policies and programmes, including in Pakistan (USAID, 2011; World Bank, 2010; ADB, 2009; Goheer & Penska, 2007; GoP, 2005a). However, 'gender' lost its specificity (Cornwall, 2007) when it became a buzzword in mainstream development practice (see **Section 1.2**). A number of authors have complained that the loss of the concept's 'political and analytical bite' has caused 'gender fatigue' among many development practitioners (Syed et al, 2009; Cornwall, 2007; Molyneux, 2004). Many also notice that 'gender' has been used for an increasing range of activities and in many cases has simply replaced the old term 'women' (Cornwall et al, 2007; Woodford-Berger, 2004; Baden & Goetz, 1997). In any case, the idea that women (mainly village women) are important development actors has created an increased demand for women workers in the Pakistani development sector. This demand has largely drawn on the argument that in Pakistan's highly gender-segregated society only women staff can approach female clients because they are unable to discuss their problems with male development practitioners (this argument is still used today, see **Paper III**).

Although Pakistani women work as development practitioners in different organisational contexts, this study focuses mainly on women working in development projects of the State of Pakistan. This is because states have received new recognition as development agents in the mainstream international development discourse since the 1990s (Jessop, 2009, 2001; Cornwall, 2002; Fung & Wright, 2001; Zaidi, 1999; World Bank, 1997; Leftwich, 1995) and hence a greater proportion of aid is once more being channelled through state institutions (World Bank, 2005; Mawdsley & Rigg, 2003). Parallel to this renewed strengthening of the state as an actor in development, donor agencies have urged governments to include local actors in development policy processes so as to ground development interventions in local realities. This is based on the premise that citizens should be able to participate in shaping development and on the assumption that public participation makes development more sustainable and thus more efficient (ADB, 2011; FAO, 2003; DFID, 1999; Stiglitz, 1998). "Citizen engagement", "public/political participation", "collaborative governance" and "participatory citizenship" have become buzzwords in development policy all over the world (Cornwall et al., 2009; Dagnino, 2007; Leal, 2007; Cornwall & Brock, 2005). The terms have been included as normative concepts into governance agendas of many governments (Brodie et al, 2009) including the Pakistani administration, and they have led to the creation of new jobs and job profiles for workers who interact with and mobilise citizens (see **Paper II** for an example of how such interactions unfold in complex ways). This has additionally intensified the demand for women workers at 'field level' in the development sector.

1.3 A focus on Pakistani women workers, particularly development practitioners

Recalling the seminal work by Norman Long (2001) and Norman Long & Ann Long (1992) on 'interfaces of development' and Thomas Bierschenk (1988) and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2005) on 'local development as a political arena', I argue that 'field-level'[7] development practitioners provide a valuable entry point for a critical development study. Although 'street-level bureaucrats' and 'development brokers' have been identified as crucial actors at the interface between the governmental development apparatus and society (Lipsky, 1980; Lewis & Mosse, 2006), the role of gender relations at these interfaces of development have not been sufficiently acknowledged so far. While I shall not write about the practices of brokerage, I will focus on Pakistani women development practitioners in order to explore how development practitioners are involved in local and global power relations around gender, work and development.

Three aspects make it particularly worth looking at Pakistani women development practitioners within the broader context of gender, work and development.

First, even though Pakistani 'working women' and in particular professional women have attracted scholarly attention, there is only a small body of literature that takes a qualitative approach and describes the complexities of these women's working environment and working lives. In quantitative studies, researchers for example probe the impact of different factors on women's participation in the employment sector (Azid, Khan & Alamasi, 2010; Faridi, Chaudhry & Anwar, 2009; Arifeen, 2008; Ahmad & Hafeez, 2007; Gondal, 2003; Naqvi & Shahnaz, 2002; Sultana, Nazli & Malik, 1994; Hamid, 1991). While these studies show that income, education, age, and marital status are major determinants of female labour participation, these studies do not explain how gender relations shape women's workplace contexts and their experiences of the workplace contexts. In the preface to her book 'No Shame for the Sun – Lives of Professional Pakistani women' (2002), Shahla Haeri remarks: '*Why, I ask, have professional*

[7] This term alludes to Michael Lipsky (1980) who uses 'street-level bureaucrats' to describe those '*public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work*'.

Muslim women in their diversity remained invisible to a vast majority of anthropologists? So far, only a few exceptional contributions by Shehla Haeri (2002), Jasmin Mirza (1999, 2002) and Jawad Syed (2010a) have made visible the complexities, ambivalences and multi-layered nature of professional Pakistani women's lives. A study on Pakistani female development practitioners' experiences in formal employment relations can contribute new insights to debates on women and work in the Pakistani context in general.

Second, little has been written so far about women working in their own country's development sector in the global South. Even though there has been a growing interest in development workers in recent years, there is a strong research focus on women (and men) from the global North working in the global South, on their colonial/imperial practices while working in a post-colonial setting and on the multitude of discourses on which women development practitioners draw to position themselves in relation to others (Fluri, 2011; Hindman & Fechter, 2011; Hindman, 2009; Stirrat, 2008; Cook, 2007; Heron, 2007; Fechter, 2005). Kathleen O'Reilly, Cecile Jackson, Anne Marie Goetz, Mokbul Morshed Ahmed and Marina de Regt, who focus on women development workers in India (O'Reilly, 2004, 2006; Jackson, 1997), Bangladesh (Goetz, 1997; Ahmad, 2002, 2007) and Yemen (de Regt, 2007), are notable exceptions. Yet they mainly discuss the practical challenges women workers face while doing this job. By treating 'women' and 'men' as monolithic categories rather than as plural, they do not make use of the full richness the academic concept of 'gender' has to offer. Furthermore, there is a dearth of academic contributions that explore gendered subject formations in development settings and go beyond researching white Western women workers' experiences in a post-colonial world. So far, little effort has been made to understand how women who work as development practitioners in their own countries experience their working environments and how they negotiate different identities; there is a complete lack of studies about Pakistan. A study on Pakistani women is a contribution to understanding 'local' women's gendered experiences as development workers.

Third, I will demonstrate that the working environments of women development workers are a crucial element for understanding the challenges and potential for success and failure of development interventions in Muslim contexts and within highly gender-segregated societies such as Pakistan. Scientific and non-scientific reports continuously point out that development interventions are not able to reach the most marginalised communities and individuals, above all women (Bieri et al, 2011; Hooper & Hamid, 2003 and Mohmand & Gazdar, 2007 for the context of Pakistan; Razavi, 2011 for a global overview). It seems as though important development actors – in particular the World Bank – have been unable so far to acknowledge the underlying structural mechanisms that cause women to be excluded from 'development' (Razavi, 2011). A study of Pakistani women who work as development practitioners in a country in which gender relations are an omnipresent topic in everyday life as well as in policy writings contributes to an empirically grounded understanding of the impact of gendered working environments on development interventions.

Focusing on gender relations in Pakistan necessarily implies engaging with religion and with Islam in particular. Religious beliefs and values have been a major source of justification for gender roles and relations (Shaheed, 2009). In this study, Islam and 'Muslim-ness' are mainly explored through the social norms that draw on discourses of religion and affect women's experiences of working environments and their practices. This approach to Islam reflects Deniz Kandiyoti's suggestion that even studies that do not privilege Islam as an analytical category can systematically explore the role and specificity of Islam (1991:2). In this sense, a study of Pakistan promises to provide an interesting example of a context in which religion, and in particular Islam, plays a pivotal role in public life.

1.4 Research questions and research aims

In the previous sections, I demonstrated that gender is an important facet of life in Pakistan, especially as far as the division of labour is concerned. I argued that a number of Pakistani women work as development practitioners despite social norms that are quite a hindrance to their participating in formal labour markets. I also maintained that findings from a research project about women development workers would contribute to broader debates on gender, work and development.

Based on these considerations, I pose the following questions:

- *What is the working situation of women in Pakistan? How have Pakistani 'state discourses' constructed links between women and non-domestic work from the 1940s to the early 2010s?* (**Paper I**)
- *What are the field realities within which Pakistani development practitioners work? How do informants construct a village as a 'development site' and villagers as 'development subjects' vis-à-vis (potential) development practitioners?* (**Paper II**)
- *What does the labour market for development practitioners look like in northwest Pakistan? To what extent is it gendered?* (**Paper III**)
- *What is Pakistani female development practitioners' experience of their work? What challenges do they face? How do they cope with these challenges?* (**Paper IV**)

My primary aim in this research is to respond to continuing calls for more detailed representations of women – and above all Muslim women – as active and diverse agents in contrast to representations that are biased towards women's victimisation and oppression (Holvino, 2010:14; Radcliffe, 2006:529).

From an empirical point of view, I aim to contribute to scholarly debates about gender and work. More specifically, this study will contribute to debates about gender and work in an Islamic country and to debates about women development workers from the global South. Second, understanding Pakistani female development practitioners' roles and positions in a field of contested gender norms will add to a broader picture of how abstract development policies are implemented at local level in Pakistan. I aim to contribute to a better understanding of current development practices in Pakistan by looking at this field and representing it by drawing on postcolonial, ethnographic methodologies.

2 Context of the research

> [I]*t is important to understand that research on social relations* is made out of social relations *which develop within and between the multiple sites of researchers' 'expanded fields'* [1] (Crang & Cook, 2007:9, original emphasis)

2.1 The institutional framework and its effects on the research process

Like any other research project, my project has been embedded in a complex setting that (partly) guided my choice of research location and research practice. My study was carried out within the framework of a large international research programme called National Centre for Competence in Research North-South (NCCR North-South)[2], funded jointly by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Swiss Development Cooperation. When I started teaching and carrying out research at the Human Geography Unit of the Department of Geography at the University of Zurich, it was already clear that the PhD research should take place in 'South Asia', that is, in a post(-)colonial[3] setting. I had not worked in that context before, did not know any of the local languages and had no personal relations to either of the two contexts. The work of the Pakistan Research Group of the NCCR North-South[4] sounded interesting; I was told that group members concentrate on '*the analysis of livelihood constraints and options of people living in the highlands of Northwest Pakistan, with special attention to the institutional context that supports or hinders people in securing and improving their lives (a context that is rapidly changing under conditions of accelerated globalisation)*' (personal email communication, 19.07.2006). I became very interested in the research theme that was defined as 'Development as a contested societal practice' (and which finally became the broad thematic area within which my research took place), and I became more and more curious about working in a context in which Islam is said to play a crucial role in society. Furthermore, it seemed possible to make use of other researchers' expertise and networks by focusing on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK; formerly known as North-West Frontier Province or NWFP). After encouraging and stimulating discussions about possible challenges and opportunities for research in northwest Pakistan, Pakistan was selected as my geographic research context and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Islamabad as my host research institute.

I decided to do my research in one of the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkwa Province and, after a first exploratory period, selected one for my major investigation. This selection was based on a convenience sampling (Patton, 1990) due to pragmatic reasons. Before I decided on this sampling strategy, I tried hard to sample a district on a statistical basis, using various purposeful sampling strategies. Unfortunately, all these strategies led me to a district that my Pakistani research colleagues and supervisors warned me against going to for security reasons or because it was too remote to do field research there in the limited time I had between lecturing in Zurich. I finally decided to work in the 'Hazara region' because it was said to be the most peaceful and safe part of the Province at the time, i.e. late 2007.

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[1] By 'expanded fields', the authors mean 'the field' in which empirical fieldwork takes place, as well as to its extensions such as family and academy.

[2] http://www.north-south.unibe.ch/

[3] The term 'postcolonial' is used in at least two ways. First, it is used to refer to the formal political status of a nation-state that is no longer a colony, thus referring to a geographical location as well as a specific historical period. Whenever I use it in this sense, I will hyphenate it thus: 'post-colonial'. Second, the term without the hyphen is used to refer to an academic field, a theoretical and political position that aims to analyse and critique the ways in which Western knowledge systems have come to dominate, and at presenting alternatives to dominant Western knowledge constructs (Sharp, 2009:3-5).

[4] http://www.nccr-pakistan.org/

2.2 Fieldwork in Hazara region, northwest Pakistan

Until 2000, Hazara Division was an official administrative unit of the Province that was made up of five districts: Abbottabad, Battagram, Haripur, Kohistan and Mansehra (see **Table 1** for an overview of the districts' areas and populations)[5]. Yet a reorganisation of local government officially abolished divisions, and Hazara Division no longer exists as an official administrative unit. However, the name 'Hazara' is still used to refer to the region in everyday life, as well as in an official context, e.g. by the regional university located in Mansehra district ('University of Hazara') or the provincial government ('*The region of Hazara is like a door to heaven, opening up to visitors a world replete with natural beauty*'; GoKPK, 2011b). The five districts of the former Hazara Division are separated from the other parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province by the River Indus; Hazara is the only part of KPK east of the Indus (**Figure 1**). Abbottabad, one of the major towns in Hazara region, is well connected to transport infrastructure. It can be reached by public transport from Peshawar in approximately 3 hrs and from Islamabad in approximately 2.5 hrs, along the famous Karakorum Highway for part of the way. After Partition in 1947, only a few Hindus, Christians and Sikhs remained in Hazara. The majority of the population are Sunni Muslims (GoP, 2000).

Table 1: Districts of Hazara: area and population (1998)
(own compilation, based on GoP, 2000:135. Estimated population was compiled by Bureau of Statistics, GoKPK, 2011a)

District	Area	Population [in thousands]		Urban proportion	Rural proportion	Density	Sex Ratio
	Km^2	1998	2008-09 (estimated)	%	%	Persons per km^2	Males per hundred females
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province	**74,521**	**17,736**	**23,971**	**16.88**	**83.12**	**238**	**105.0**
Hazara	**17,064**	**3506**	**4311**	**8.6**	**91.4**	**205**	**103.0**
Abbottabad	1967	881	1071	17.93	82.07	448	100.2
Battagram	1301	307	397	-	100.00	236	106.6
Haripur	1725	692	875	11.95	88.05	401	99.7
Kohistan	7492	473	477	-	100.00	63	124.4
Mansehra (incl. Tor Ghar)	4579	1153	1491	5.32	94.68	252	98.4

Before I continue describing Hazara region, my research location, I would like to clarify two points. First, I decided to anonymise the places I worked in. I even decided not to specify districts and have chosen instead to refer to my research location as the 'Hazara region'. I took this decision because I want to grant several civil servants and project staff a certain anonymity. I am convinced that this gives enough detail to understand the role the context plays in my data. Second, the following description of the research location (Hazara) is based on the 'official governmental discourse'. I put it this way because my description builds on the representation of Hazara found in official government reports or in reports drawing on data from the Pakistan and KPK governments (mainly contained in the 1998 Provincial Census Report of the NWFP, 1998 District Census Reports and the Gazetteer of the Hazara District

[5] Only in 2011, Tor Ghar was declared an official district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. It was formerly part of Mansehra District, then known as 'Kala Dhaka'.

1883-4). However, I will add data from additional sources whenever I find it useful and necessary. The reason for drawing on these sources is that it is very difficult to obtain up-to-date and reliable local level data in written form. Some practitioners and researchers have thus completely neglected to cite the sources on which they base their descriptions (Cook, 2007; Akram-Lodhi, 1996). Others stick to the scant 'official data' to describe research locations and to justify the research focus and sampling strategies (Shahbaz et al, 2010; Siegmann, 2010; Malik, 2009; Idrees et al, 2008). I mention this dilemma because I will come back to the question of representational practices in **Paper II**. However, I shall now describe the natural, social, politico-administrative and historical features of the Hazara region.

The landscape and climate of Hazara region are very diverse (GoP, 2000:1-13). The northern parts of Hazara extend into the outer Himalayan range, with valleys that display a temperate climate, lush vegetation and rugged landscapes with mountain peaks rising above 5,000 m amsl. Hilly regions can be found in the middle of Hazara, their terrain ranging from 600 m to 2,500 m amsl. In the southern parts of Hazara are plains lying between 450 m and 1,000 m amsl that experience hot summers and cold winters. Rainfall varies between approx. 700 mm in the lower and 1,350 mm in the higher parts of the region. Monsoon winds influence the south of the region, usually between the end of June and mid September and often bringing heavy rainfall.

The region is characterised by mountainous terrain and small landholdings of around 0.4 - 0.8 ha (district profiles and personal information; this is small compared to the large landholdings in Punjab, Sindh and other areas of KPK). Rain-fed agriculture, some small-scale industries and above all remittances (Jan, 2008, Gazdar, 2003) account for most of local inhabitants' incomes (GoP, 2000). The main crops are wheat and maize, which are basically used for subsistence. Vegetables and fruits grow well in the region and are increasingly produced for sale at market. Timber has always been a major resource in the forest-rich northern districts of KPK, and timber trading (both legal and illegal) is an important business for local people and for government officers stationed in the region, as in other parts of the Province (Shahbaz & Ali, 2009; Ali, Shahbaz & Suleri, 2006; Geiser & Steimann, 2004). People from Hazara have practised migration for many decades, and remittances make an important contribution to the livelihoods of family members that have remained behind (GoP, 2000:29; Siegmann, 2010; Jan, 2008 for KPK).

A number of different politico-historical episodes have shaped social organisation and through it the lives of people living in Hazara. When the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) was established in 1901 under the British, Hazara became part of the new province. While the British generally ruled the southern parts of Hazara directly, the northern areas, consisting of several 'native states', only fell under an indirect form of British rule (GoP, 2000: 14-23; Punjab Government, 2000; Douie, 1974:291). Two of these 'native states' were the State of Amb (also called feudal Tanawal) and the State of Agror, both located in what is now Mansehra district. In the 1891 'Agror Valley Regulations', the rights of the Khan of Agror were declared to have been forfeited to the government. What was once called 'unsettled/tribal area' was thus turned into a 'settled area', whereas the State of Amb remained independent until Partition in 1947. Although the State of Amb was made part of NWFP in 1969, the parts of the state not submerged by the Tarbela Dam in the 1970s still have tribal area status today. These areas are constitutionally recognised as Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) (Pakistani, 2011:Part XII Miscellaneous, Chapter 3: Tribal Areas). This means that while the KPK Provincial Assembly can exert certain powers in PATAs, it cannot implement laws directly. Other tribal areas within the Hazara region are located in Kohistan[6]. Also, Kala Dhaka (the Black Mountains) was a tribal area until it became a settled area – Tor Ghar district – in 2011

[6] Other districts in KPK that are recognised as PATAs are Chitral, Dir and Swat (including Kalam), as well as the Malakand Protected Area (Pakistani, 2011: Part XII Miscellaneous, Chapter 3 Tribal Areas).

(DAWN, 2011b)[7]. In **Paper II**, people differentiate, for example, between settled and unsettled areas when talking about a village and villagers.

Figure 1: District map of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK) & FATA, incl. Hazara region (hatched districts)

[7] Kala Dhaka became the 25th district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province on 28th January 2011.

There are ongoing demands for Hazara to be a separate province (Hassan, 2011a; Our Hazara, 2011). The Hazara province movement gained momentum in 2010, both during and after the process of renaming the North West Frontier Province Khyber Pakhtunkwa through the 18th constitutional amendment. During protests in April 2010, speakers criticised the renaming of the province, claiming that it had robbed the people of Hazara Division of their identity (DAWN, 2010). On 12th April 2010, government officials fired on protestors, killing seven of them (Javed, 2010). As recently as autumn 2011, the media reported official support for the creation of Hazara province (DAWN, 2011a; Hassan, 2011b).

Military operations carried out in 2009 in neighbouring Districts (mainly in Swat and Buner) led to an increased flow of internally displaced people (Nelson, 2010; Ghufran, 2009). Even though many refugees were housed in government-run camps outside the Hazara region, local informants also reported that refugees – above all extremists – fled over the mountains to the Hazara region. Media and informants reported that migratory flows – of civilians as well as militants – have become a burden on the local population – on the one hand because civilians have to be taken care of; on the other because there is unease about or even fear of militant people's actions[8]. Parts of Hazara have been even suspected of harbouring militants and their training camps. One of the most famous fugitives, Osama bin Laden, was found and killed in Abbottabad in spring 2011.

Despite recent political incidents that have – at least to some extent – tarnished the region's good reputation, Hazara continues to be a favourite leisure destination and has been appreciated by foreign and domestic visitors for centuries (GoP, 2000:41-43). Hilly places such as Murree, Nathiagali, Thandiani and Ayubia with their pleasant climate are easily accessible from centres of power such as Islamabad and Peshawar. Alpine pastures and snow-covered peaks make the Kaghan valley a famous destination for people from all over Pakistan. Hazara has also always been an area of transit to and from China for tourists and traders. In the very south of Hazara, the Karakorum Highway (KKH) meets the Grand Trunk Road (GT Road) connecting Islamabad to Peshawar. Since it crosses the entire Hazara region, it provides a good entry point to the Northern Areas. In informal conversations during my field visits, several stakeholders mentioned a plan to blacktop the jeepable National Highway over Babusar Pass (N15, Mansehra-Naran-Jalkhad-Chilas Road), providing a better connection between Hazara region and Chilas in the Northern Areas. However, steep slopes make it relatively difficult to construct and maintain road infrastructure.

The individual districts of Hazara differ strikingly in their Human Development Index (HDI) ranking (Hussain, 2003:12, see **Table 2**). While Haripur and Abbottabad are among the highest ranking of Pakistan's 91 districts (Haripur is 3rd with an HDI of 0.629 and Abbottabad is 6th with 0.598), Kohistan and Battagram are among the lowest-ranked districts (Kohistan: ranked 98 with an HDI of 0.332 and Battagram in 83rd position with an HDI of 0.363). Mansehra, with an HDI of 0.459, is ranked in the middle (rank 58), but still below the Pakistani average of 0.541. When looking at the literacy rate (for the population aged 10 and older, see **Table 2**)[9] in the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkwha Province, Abbotabad with 57% and Kohistan with 11% were ranked top and bottom respectively in 1998 (GoP, 2002:25). There is a remarkable density of higher educational organisations in Hazara region, such as the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Ayub Medical College and Hazara University, partly based on Abbottabad's past and present role as army headquarters. Its reputation as an educational centre

[8] The atmosphere during my stays and between my visits to Hazara became more and more tense, and this complicated the fieldwork overall.

[9] Literacy is defined as the ability to read a newspaper and write a simple letter (GoP, 2005b:43).

has increased even more with the worsening security situation in the provincial capital, Peshawar, where people used to send their children for higher education.

Table 2: District-wise HDI and literacy rate of population (10 years and above) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (Data sources: Hussain, 2003:11 for HDI; GoP, 2002:25 for literacy rates 1998[10] and GoP, 2011b:Table 2.14a for literacy rates 2010-11)

District	Human Development Index (HDI), 1998		Literacy rate (%), 1998			Literacy rate (%), 2010-11		
	HDI	HDI rank (of 91 ranks)	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
All Pakistan	0.541		45			58	69	46
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK)	**0.510**		**35**	**51**	**19**	**50**	**68**	**33**
KPK urban	0.627		54	68	39	63	77	50
KPK rural	0.489		31	48	15	48	67	29
Hazara								
Abbottabad	0.598	6	57	75	39	69	81	59
Battagram	0.363	83	18	29	7	49	70	28
Haripur	0.629	3	54	71	37	70	84	57
Kohistan	0.332	89	11	17	3	26	42	6
Mansehra (incl. Tor Ghar)	0.459	58	36	51	23	58	74	45

The **Introduction** to this thesis has outlined the fact that Pakistan's society is highly gendered in general terms and that women in Pakistan face more challenges than men to access resources. Gender-based disparities seem to be more pronounced in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province than in Pakistan as a whole. For example, women's labour force participation, a proxy that is often used to evaluate gender-based disparities, is significantly lower in the Khyber Pakhtunkwa Province than in other parts of the country. In KPK, the refined labour force participation rate was 14.7% for women (62.6% for men) while the national average was 21.7% (68.7% for men) in 2010-2011 (GoP, 2011a:19). In everyday conversations, people explain that *purdah* – a practice of separating men and women – is interpreted in a much stricter way in KPK than in other areas of Pakistan. However, this has been mainly related to the Pukthoon communities and the *Pakhtonwali,* their code of behaviour. Pakhtoon communities are ethnically dominant in most of the Province, except in Hazara; Hazara is known for the diverse ethnic backgrounds of its residents and its mix of Hindko-, Pashto-, Gujjari- and Kohistani-speaking inhabitants (GoP, 2000:23-24). Compared with other parts of the province, Hazara is said to be less conservative regarding the role of women (but still stricter than many other parts of the country), a common explanation being that the different social groups have diverse ways of interpreting *purdah* in multi-ethnic Hazara. **Paper III** and **Paper IV** will explore the impact of *purdah* on women working in the development field in the Hazara region.

[10] There are different indications on literacy ratios, see for example Hussain et al (2003:136) and http://www.khyberpakhtunkhwa.gov.pk/Departments/BOS/ (22.12.2011).

Hazara's reputation as a place to work is neither extremely good nor extremely bad, yet it has got worse with the political unrest. This has caused the provincial government to increase the 'unattractive/hard area allowance' for its staff in certain areas such as Kohistan, Kala Dhaka and Shangla (AAP, 2010; GoKPK, 2009). Development, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women with a formal job are controversial topics in the region. According to local informants, the region has benefited from development interventions (sponsored by international and national donors) over the past decades: schools were built, streets blacktopped and local politicians trained. On the other hand, experiences following the 2005 earthquake[11] left locals with ambiguous feelings towards relief and development interventions, both national and international. Informants reported that non-local Western and Pakistani development practitioners provoked local residents with parties and that some NGOs took development money without delivering help (see also Bano, 2008). In formal and informal conversations during my field visits, informants mentioned that militant and extremist organisations have increasingly stirred up local people against relief and development interventions, spreading scepticism and rejection among local people (see also **Paper III** and **Paper IV**). Nevertheless, the region has been a focal point for development interventions by national and international donors (above all during the first three years after the earthquake), and many development jobs were created in the region.

At least two aspects make Hazara an interesting research location. First, research on how women development practitioners in Hazara experience gendered work contexts will generate insights of relevance to other places within Pakistan and maybe even to other Muslim contexts (see **Chapter 3** on how micro-practices of power are linked to constellations of power at other scales). It is not only in Hazara that women work as development practitioners, but also in other areas of Pakistan. In **Paper I**, I argue that Hazara is not an exception within Pakistan regarding certain opportunities and challenges women encounter if they want to work. Second, insights from a case study in Hazara can contribute to a better understanding of power relations along lines of class, gender, ethnicity, etc. beyond the context of Hazara. As I will demonstrate in **Paper II**, dichotomies such as rural/urban and developed/undeveloped are key to the question of who is eligible and who is responsible for development in Hazara. In line with findings from Nepal (Pigg, 1992), I argue that rural places in Pakistan are constructed as 'jungly' and 'needy' by dominant, mainly urban-centred development discourses in a way that is not unique to Hazara. In this sense, I will present conclusions with relevance beyond the case study of Hazara.

[11] On 8th October 2005, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.6 hit the region, causing an enormous amount of casualties and extreme physical damage. As a consequence, national and international relief and development aid was sent to the region in form of money, material and staff. Even today, locals complain about the misuse of funds and of the relief package, mainly by different levels of government officials and NGO workers.

3 Conceptual underpinnings

In the previous section, I discussed how the institutional framework influenced some of my first decisions about my research project. Afterwards, however, the research project was mainly shaped by my theoretical background and conceptual underpinnings. They inspired my research questions and helped me make sense of what I experienced in Hazara and other parts of Pakistan. For this study, I use theory as a 'heuristic framework' rather than as an 'explanatory framework' (Lund, 2010:26ff; based on Mouzelis, 1995), which means that I use theory as a *'a set of conceptual tools which, rather than telling us anything substantive about the social world, suggests ways of approaching it*' (Lund, 2010:26)[1]. In this sense, I have drawn on conceptual tools from poststructuralist, feminist[2] and, to a lesser extent, postcolonial theories[3] for my research design and to develop my arguments. What interests me in these theories is the conceptualisation of power as immanent to discursive constitutions of reality, the emphasis on language and symbolic meaning in the constitution of reality, and the replacement of a monolithic, static identity by a multiply constituted subject. In the following, I first explain why a research perspective that draws on these theories is interesting to study 'development'. Afterwards, I outline the concepts of 'power', 'knowledge/representation/truth' and 'subjects/identities', each in a separate section. I conclude by discussing the relevance of these concepts to this study.

3.1 'Development' as a political project with potential to constitute new subjects

Recent development literature suggests that 'development policies', 'development interventions' or simply 'development' should be conceptualised as political operations (Lund, 2010:24) or political projects (Radcliffe, 2006:525). According to these authors, development implies both formal and informal politics and is enacted as a social practice by actors from the global North as well as the global South. Some authors (Glassman, 2011; Silvey, 2010; Lund, 2010; Lawson, 2007) call this perspective 'critical development scholarship'. While mainstream development studies focus on analysing the effectiveness of specific development policies and on working for 'tool-perfection' of development, critical development scholarship aims instead to conceptualise development as a research object in itself, analysing '*effects of development interventions beyond what was intended*' (Lund, 2010:23).

Within critical development scholarship, there is a large body of literature on formal politics (Geiser & Rist, 2009; Ferguson, 2006; Mosse, 2004; Corbridge et al, 2005; Rossi, 2004a; Gupta, 1995). Formal politics usually refers to the '*operation of the constitutional system of government and its publicly-defined institutions and procedures*' (Painter, 1995:7), but also to the formal structures and procedures that accompany

[1] Honan et al (2000) show nicely how different theories in their function of a heuristic framework guide '*what different work can be done with* [three different theories]*, what each framing enables us to see in the data*' (Honan et al, 2000:10). The three theories they use suggest different analytical approaches and in consequence allow three different readings of a specific set of empirical material. While the authors are not interested in judging which reading is right or better, they discuss for what purpose and under which circumstance each of the readings could be useful.

[2] I refer under the label 'poststructuralist theories' to a number of very heterogeneous thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault and Lacan. Poststructuralist 'feminist theories' refer to thinkers that are similarly heterogeneous, such as Irigary, Kristeva and Butler. For a discussion of poststructuralist approaches, their similarities and differences within and beyond poststructuralism, see e.g. Villa (2009 and 2008b). For discussions about general interactions, alliances and tensions between poststructuralist (above all Foucauldian) and feminist theories, see for example Sawicki (2005), Weedon (1997), Deveaux (1994), Scott (1988) and Martin (1982).

[3] Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who are both important to this thesis, are usually referred to as postcolonial thinkers. The theoretical foundations of postcolonialism have been considerably influenced by poststructuralist approaches such as Foucault's notion of power/knowledge (Sharp, 2009; Castro Varela & Dhawan, 2005:8; Hall, 1992).

'development'. Making formal politics the focus of a study can, for example, mean identifying normative elements in development policy papers, such as the goals of an envisaged social change, and analysing proposed strategies, such as the methods for attaining the defined goals. Critical development scholarship is particularly attentive to silenced and constricted debates. What is 'sayable' and what is 'unsayable' in a political arena at the given time is considered an essential part of the political project called 'development' (Rossi, 2004a; Apthorpe and Gasper, 1996).

Additionally (and even more importantly for my work), an emerging body of literature within critical development scholarship analyses the more informal and indirect phenomena of development, such as the politics of identity and the politics of difference (Braun, 2010; Yarrow, 2008; Li, 2007; Heaton-Shrestha, 2006; Mindry, 2001; Shrestha, 1995). Informal politics, according to Painter (1995:7), is about '*forming alliances, exercising power, getting other people to do things, developing influence, and protecting and advancing particular goals and interests'*. Hence, critical development studies with a focus on informal politics study '*the contested nature of the politics of making the subjects, spaces, and scales of development*' (Silvey 2010:829). Braun (2010) for example shows that non-elite women in Lesotho are able to access development money indirectly by positioning themselves as sex workers for foreign development workers. With her nuanced reading of the gendered politics of development, she demonstrates how a large-scale development project reinforces existing gender inequalities and produces new gendered subjects. Li (2008), in her account of the Indonesian context, analyses where the 'will to improve' comes from and how it works, and by doing so, she explores how governmental development interventions reconfigure subjects' ways of thinking and acting.

Highlighting that development as a political project implies not only material and economic change but also social transformations (in the sense that development has the potential to constitute new subjects and spaces of development) has been identified as one of the most challenging – yet also one of the most fruitful – shifts in recent 'development research' (Silvey, 2010; Radcliffe, 2006). The literature shows that new types of questions can be asked as a consequence of this new understanding of development. However, these questions also require suitable conceptual approaches and methodologies.

In this context, the adoption of a poststructuralist perspective has been seen as promising a more nuanced analysis of 'development' and the politics of identities and difference (Lewis & Mosse, 2006b; Rossi, 2004b:560). Yet what does such a perspective (or heuristic framework) mean? In the following section, I outline the main concepts that I have borrowed from poststructuralist (and feminist and postcolonial) theory and explain how they have informed my study.

3.2 Power

The concept of power I use in this study is strongly influenced by the middle to late writings of Michel Foucault. In his writings, Foucault conceptualises power in an '*altogether novel way*' (Hall, 2001:77) as multi-sited, dispersed, relational and productive. He defines power as immanent in all social relations. It is not possessed; it is exercised. To take an example, I could argue that Pakistani women have the power to take up formal employment, since they are constitutionally allowed to do so. Yet Foucault would argue that power is only exercised if women really perform the action of taking up formal employment. Performing the action means that they are not restricted by informal rules such as local gender norms. If they do not take up formal employment, they are in a power relation but do not exercise power. As we can see from this example, power is also relational. It means that power always involves a relationship between at least two entities. It then depends on the specific relationship (on the resources involved, personal characteristics, etc.) as to how power is exercised and to what effect. Returning to the example above, we

could ask: Does the woman possess the skills to take up employment, is she allowed to do so by her husband and family, and does she at all conceive of employment as being an option for her? This last question leads on to another important aspect of Foucault's conceptualisation of power. Instead of thinking of power as coming from a specific source at the top – e.g. from the sovereign, the state or the ruling class – Foucault thinks of power as a network-like multiplicity of relationships: '*power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted "above" society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of*' (Foucault, 1982:791). This implies that power relations permeate all levels of social life, working at different levels such as the family, formal politics, economy and so on (Hall, 2001:77) and is articulated both within discursive practices and institutional settings. If power is articulated in discourses and institutions, it is not only destructive (as in the form of domination, exploitation and violence), but also productive in the sense that it produces knowledge (see **Section 3.2**) and subjects (see **Section 3.3**) (Foucault, 1977:194).

Foucault's conceptualisation has at least three implications for the way power is studied.

First, the research interest is shifted away from questions such as 'Who has power?' and 'How does power manifest itself?' to questions of '*How* is power exercised?' and 'What happens when individuals exert (as they say) power over others?' (Foucault, 1982: 786). This calls for an analysis of the practices, techniques and procedures that give effect to power. Postcolonial thinkers, for example, have argued that it is not only economic and political operations of power that have allowed Western countries to rise to dominance, but also the dominance of 'Western ways of knowing' (Sharp, 2009:110). As Chandra Talpade Mohanty puts it:

> *…it is only in so far as 'Woman/Women' and 'the East' are defined as* Others*, or as peripheral, that (western) Man/Humanism can represent him/itself as the centre.*
> (Mohanty, 1988:81)

Second, if power is dispersed, studies of the 'micro-physics of power' and everyday practices become an interesting focus for research (this is the case for **Paper II, Paper III** and **Paper IV**). With the 'micro-physics of power' (or micro-powers), Foucault shifts our attention away from grand strategies of power towards the many small mechanisms through which power operates, e.g. on our souls, wishes, practices etc. Michel Foucault argues that:

> [T]*he analysis of power relations within a society cannot be reduced to the study of a series of institutions, not even to the study of all those institutions which would merit the name 'political'. Power relations are rooted in the system of social networks. This is not to say, however, that there is a primary and fundamental principle of power which dominates society down to the smallest detail; but, taking as point of departure the possibility of action upon the action of others (which is coextensive with every social relationship), multiple forms of individual disparity, of objectives, of the given application of power over ourselves or others, of, in varying degrees, partial or universal institutionalization, of more or less deliberate organization, one can define different forms of power.*
> (Foucault, 1982:792-793)

Focusing our analysis on micro-practices of power does neither mean that power is not manifest in institutions such as the police, family and schools, nor that such institutions do not exercise power. Yet of special interest for my study is the focus on the '*system of differentiations which permits one to act upon the actions of others*' (Foucault, 1982: 792): if systems of differentiations regulate the conduct of others, it is a way to exercise power. By system of differentiations, Foucault means differentiations determined by the law or by traditions of status and privilege, economic differences, linguistic and cultural differences, differences

in know-how and competence, and so on (Foucault, 1982: 792). As an example, we can think of gender differentiations that act upon subjects' occupational choices, for instance in the sense that Pakistani women find certain occupations more suitable than others. I will come back to Foucault's conceptualisation of a recursive relationship between structure and agency in the section on subjects and identity.

Third, if power is everywhere, then resistance is not possible outside power relations. However, 'forms of resistance' are possible even within power structures – for example against forms of power that are domination. This is possible because all domination is power, but not all power is domination (Foucault, 1982:789). Foucault suggests using forms of resistance as a starting point for analysis to bring to light power relations (Foucault, 1982:780). As Foucault explains: '*For example, to find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity*' (Foucault, 1982:780). As an analytic tool, he mentions three types of struggles: the struggle '*against forms of domination (ethnic, social, and religious); against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission)*' (Foucault, 1982:781). The first and the last types of struggle have been of core interest to feminist and postcolonial research, mainly the struggles against forms of patriarchal, imperial and colonial domination, and against the forms of subjection of women, 'Others' and subalterns to male, imperial, colonial and postcolonial powers (Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 1988; hooks, 1981, 1984; Said, 1978; to mention but a few). In **Section 3.3**, I will show how authors with backgrounds in feminist and postcolonial theory have contributed to a better understanding of different forms of subjection based on this concept of power.

3.3 Knowledge, representation and truth

Not only my understanding of power, but also my understandings of knowledge and representation are heavily shaped by Foucault's writings. Michel Foucault conceptualises knowledge as something that is produced through discourse. Discourse itself, as Stuart Hall (2001:72) interprets Foucault, is a '*system of representation*' that encompasses at least three major subsystems: language, institutions and practices. Together, in the form of 'discourse', they give meaning to things. To take a very simplified example, 'development' in my research context is given meaning through the language of improvement and expertise ('the vulnerable', 'the developed'), through institutions such as development agencies and the 'developmental state', and through practices such as 'social organising' and 'awareness-raising courses'. However, it is important to remember that within this conceptualisation discourse, representation and knowledge are defined as historically contingent, i.e. they are true only within a specific historical context and they are subject to change as a result of shifting meanings. According to Foucault, power and knowledge are not independent; knowledge is always a form of power, but it is also that '*power is implicated in the questions of whether and in what circumstances knowledge is to be applied or not*' (Hall, 2001:76). For knowledge to be powerful, it must be accepted to some degree as legitimate. Foucault suggests understanding power and discourse (and hence knowledge) as mutually constitutive:

> *The exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information ... the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power.... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.'*
> (Foucault, 1980: 52, cited in Townley, 1993:521)

This point has also been brought up by feminist and postcolonial thinkers who – in more or less close engagement with Foucault – have criticised scientific representations of being male, white, heterosexual

and biased towards the upper class. Thinkers like Said (1978), Haraway (1988), Mohanty (1988) and Spivak (1988) have shown that many representations are racist, gendered, imperial and thus also silence certain voices such as those of women and 'subalterns' (Spivak, 1988). They argue that the scientific knowledge and representations produced in particular historic and social contexts, through the exercise of power, has produced partially blind truths.

This conceptualisation has at least two implications for the way knowledge and representations are studied (and used) within this heuristic framework.

First, it opens up space for investigating questions like: How does certain knowledge become 'true' and thus authoritative at a specific moment in time and in a specific place? Which knowledge is made invisible? And what kind of effects does the authority of a certain body of knowledge cause? Is it ethical – and even possible – to speak for others? This view of a knowledge/power nexus has not only opened up space for new questions, but it has also increased the need for further reflection on how discourses shape our own claims to knowledge as researchers. What Marcus & Fischer (1986) and Clifford & Marcus (1986) called the 'crisis of representation' redefined the link between researchers' experiences and the texts they produce, and suggested ways of dealing methodologically with the fact that as researchers we too are enmeshed in power relations. I will come back to this point in **Section 3.4**.

The second implication of the conceptualisation of knowledge outlined above is related to the creative moment of power that is – as we have seen above – immanent in all social relations:

> *We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes,' it 'represses,' it 'censors,' it 'abstracts,' it 'masks,' it 'conceals.' In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.* (Foucault, 1977:194)

This perspective encourages us researchers – on the one hand – to analyse how reality is constituted through the production of knowledge and subjects. On the other hand, it also invites us to take part in the production of knowledge through the creative exercise of power. In order to elaborate on this point, I wish to refer back to the concept of resistance discussed in **Section 3.1**. I do this because Foucault's understanding of resistance has consequences that go beyond the analytical process and link resistance to the practices of representation. In a poststructuralist/feminist/postcolonial framework, researchers themselves are urged to exercise resistance by disrupting and resisting the discreet exercising of power through a conscious and critical use of representational practices. Rather than providing a scientific analysis that seeks to establish 'truth', the goal of such an analysis should be to create a 'discursive space' where dominant meanings can be resisted and new meanings can be produced (this is the goal of **Paper I**, **Paper II** and **Paper IV**) (see also **Section 4.4**).

3.4 Subjects and identities

To conceptualise subjects and identities, I draw on perspectives that are labelled as poststructuralist theories (including late writings by Foucault, see Sarasin, 2005:172-199) and intersectionality research. If we understand – as I mentioned in the previous section – power, knowledge and subjects as mutually constitutive, we are challenged to rethink the concept of identity. A number of authors from poststructuralist, psychoanalytical and postcolonial studies have questioned the humanist ideal of a fixed subject with a stable identity and replaced it with a multiply constituted, embodied, non-essentialist, relational subject that is embedded in multiple fields of power (Hall 2001; MacDonald 1991; Butler 1990;

Haraway 1988; Kristeva 1980; Mohanty 1988; Spivak 1985; 198). From a poststructuralist perspective, a subject is always a discursively constituted subject that can take up different positions available to it within discursive possibilities (Wetherell 1998; Bamberg 1997; Davies & Harré 1990). This concept is fundamental to poststructuralist theory:

> *Post-structuralist discourse entails a move from the self as a noun (and thus stable and relatively fixed) to the self as a verb, always in process, taking its shape in and through the discursive possibilities through which selves are made. (…) The subject of post-structuralism, unlike the humanist subject, then, is constantly in process; it only exists as process; it is revised and (re)presented through images, metaphors, storylines and other features of language, such as pronoun grammar; it is spoken and respoken, each speaking existing in a palimpsest with the others.*
> (Davies 1997:274-275)

This approach to the 'subject' is interesting insofar as it conceptualises structure and agency as a recursive relationship. Even though one only becomes a subject by being subjected by discourses, there is a discursive space within which agency is possible (Korobov 2001; Butler 1990; Davies 1997; Foucault 1982). Subjects – such as villagers, government officials, development practitioners and researchers – may be subjected as 'underdeveloped' or 'experts' by development discourses. But they can also mobilise (or choose not to mobilise) particular aspects of their identities in particular circumstances (Nash 2008: 11) and position themselves in ways others recognise as legitimate, e.g. as 'development subjects' (see **Paper II**). Intersectionality research has shown that people draw on various categorical differentiations (such as gender, class, race, religious affiliation, nationality, sexual orientation etc.) to position themselves within discursive spaces. Since the system of differences is not fix, differences are made meaningful in various ways. Time, place, subject position and available practices delimit a subject's experiences of being subjected. A subject's subjectivity, i.e. '*the experience of the lived multiplicity of positionings*' (Blackman et al, 2008:6), influences what is possible for it to say, do, feel, perceive, desire and aim, and based on that, how its identities are constructed. With such a focus on the *becoming* rather than on the *being* of a subject, West and Fenstermaker (1995) define identities as 'situated accomplishments'. They and other scholars of intersectionality stress that categories of difference do not work as 'addition' but rather as 'multiplication', i.e. rather than gender *and* race, it is gender *intersecting* with race that constitutes subjects' complex identities (Nash, 2008:6; Hancock, 2007; Valentine, 2007; McCall, 2005). An intersectionality approach provides an analytical starting point from which subjects' experiences of identity as well as oppression and privilege can be analysed. Identities in the poststructuralist understanding are – like knowledge – co-constructed by agents and societal structures and thus contingent, fluid and always in process. A woman's 'illiteracy' (see **Paper II**) cannot be 'discovered' since it is not a pre-existing characteristic; it is a situated accomplishment of a discourse, produced in relation to somebody/something else. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988) has argued: '*only from the vantage point of the west is it possible to define the 'third world' as underdeveloped and economically dependent*' (Mohanty, 1988:82).

This conceptualisation of subjects and identities implies that poststructuralist frameworks encourage the study of the discursive possibilities that are made available to people and how people work with and experience them. The research interest shifts towards the question of how discursive relations (incl. language, institutions and practices) produce a self and with what effects.

3.5 Rationale for using these concepts

I was attracted to the above-mentioned concepts of power, knowledge and subjects for my study on gender, work and development because they allow me to do three things.

First, these conceptualisations allow me to link my analysis of micro-practices of power to constellations of power at other scales. There is an ongoing debate about the explanatory power and value of case studies. Case studies are sometimes accused of producing highly locale-specific knowledge without any potential to come up with general explanations. However, if power is dispersed and immanent in all social interactions, it is possible in a case study to reveal discursive practices that reflect power structures beyond that single case (see also Flyvberg, 2006; Yin, 1994). The focus on women development practitioners' engagement with gender norms (see **Paper IV**) will for example allow me to contribute to the understanding of how employment is constructed in a gendered way, reflecting power relations that work in other parts of Pakistan as well. Based on my understanding of power, it makes sense to emphasise people's everyday practices in their discursive contexts in order to try to understand both their subjective experiences and the practices that construct these subjective experiences (Lather, 2007:484).

Second, this framework allows me to conceptualise subjects as capable of action and forces me to represent their fluid subjectivities beyond dichotomies such as men/women, Christian/Muslim and poor/wealthy. If my heuristic framework conceptualises subjects as co-constituted by structure and agency, then although it acknowledges the constraining effects of discourses, it allows for agency by these women as well as by me. Further, the relational conceptualisation of women (i.e. women as part of gender relations) makes it possible to carry out research on women without reifying 'woman' as a category. When I focus on women, I portray 'woman' as plural and relational categories, highlighting the fact that subjects are constituted in multiple ways through institutions, representations and everyday practices, including those enacted by development agencies and research. Several researchers have recently called for alternative representations of women's subjectivities. Holvino, for example, examines feminist frameworks' potential to study intersections between class, gender and other subjectivities and recalls earlier demands for scholarly constructions that focus on women's agency, resistance and survival, not just on their victimisation and oppression (Holvino, 2010:14). Using my framework, I am able to explore ambivalent and multiple discourses that are at work, organising these women's complex identities.

Third, these conceptual underpinnings offer me a way of handling my own subjectivities in the research process better. There has been criticism of white researchers doing research in post-colonial settings such as Pakistan, above all in combination with a thematic focus on gender and feminism. 'Western women' have been accused of pursuing an imperialist agenda with their Western-based concepts of feminism that they have applied to research in the global South (McEwan, 2001:102; Mohanty, 1991). I agree and admit that my research situation is tricky in this regard. Yet, as Robert Young puts it: '*If you participate you are, as it were, an Orientalist, but of course if you don't then you're a eurocentrist ignoring the problem*' (Spivak & Young, 1991:11). Additionally, I have argued above that all people are involved in diverse power relations – including Pakistani feminists and non-feminists. They are enmeshed in postcolonial (and other) power relations too. As long as there is such a dearth of empirically grounded qualitative research done by women in Pakistan outside urban areas (Khattak, 2009), I am convinced that my account can provide valuable insights into the issue at hand. However, I understand my contribution as just one version of reality, as an embodied, 'partial perspective' (Haraway, 1988) that complements other perspectives:

> *Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision. The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join*

> *with another, to see together without claiming to be another.*
> (Haraway, 1988:586).

In this sense, I hope that my heuristic framework allows me to fashion my research – in the sense of a critical development study – as a struggle against certain forms of dominant subjectification processes and knowledge production through the creation of an extended discursive space.

4 Methodology and methods

Knowing that I would do my research in Pakistan's Hazara region, I had to balance competing issues - mainly my own thematic and heuristic interests against practical issues. At the beginning of the research, I was interested in doing fieldwork in remote geographical areas because these were the settings in which it was said that people could not benefit from development programmes, yet the security situation deteriorated in some of those remote areas. I wanted to live in a village and experience at least some parts of village life, yet the security situation posed a lot of challenges and I decided to stay in guesthouses and rented flats in the district capitals. I accepted the long and arduous car journeys to visit people in their villages; yet when I came too often, people became suspicious and did not want to host me anymore. I was interested in talking to people on my own, yet I was not able to learn enough Urdu or any of the other languages spoken in the region, i.e. Pashto, Gujjri and Hindko, and had to work with interpreters. I wanted to do unstructured interviews and informal discussions with open-ended questions, yet people found it suspicious when they did not receive a predefined questionnaire with closed questions. These were some of the dilemmas I had to deal with in this research set-up.

Therefore, the field sometimes seemed to be like '*a task at which no one ever does more than not utterly fail*', as Geertz once described it (1988:143, cited in Lather, 2001:478). Doing fieldwork involved a variety of double binds such as those mentioned above. The bad thing about double binds is that they can create unease, discontent and even fear. The good thing is that although some specific limitations are connected to my personal abilities and skill, I am not the only one fighting with such dilemmas, since all researchers experience double binds of one kind or another (Lather, 2001). In what follows, I will explain how I dealt methodologically and practically with some of the aforementioned issues and the methods I used.

4.1 Research design and process

This qualitative study is based on an **iterative research design** (see **Figure 2**), including several phases of data collection, analysis, sampling and writing, so as to ground the research topics and questions empirically and react flexibly to new or unpredicted circumstances (Flick, 2005:71-75). I started the process with a research topic in mind rather than with a neatly defined research question. I was generally interested in how different local people participate in negotiating local development in rural Pakistan. In an initial explorative phase of fieldwork I built up networks, contacted people (mainly government officials on whose permission I depended in order to do research on governmental development), visited places, and collected and analysed first sets of data. Based on the outcomes of this phase, I pursued relevant aspects more systematically and in this way narrowed down the scope of my research and honed the research questions, as a number of authors have suggested doing (Helfferich, 2011:167-175; Flick, 2005:76; Strauss & Corbin, 1996:24). The choice of Hazara as the geographical context for this research was part of this explorative phase. I also took other decisions (regarding sampling, methods and the practical organisation of the research) and planned further phases of data collection and analysis. It was only after several research steps that I focused on gender and its relations to development practitioners' experiences of working environments.

PHASE ONE	PHASE TWO	PHASE THREE	PHASE FOUR	PHASE FIVE	PHASE SIX
Preparation of proposal and fieldwork · Literature review · Short-trip to Pakistan for networking · Formulation of research questions · Presentation of proposal · Preparation of fieldwork	**Fieldwork I** · Accessing government structures · Selection of case study setting (district, project, area etc.) · Data generation and first analyses	**Working up of fieldwork I** · Data processing, analysis and report writing · Short-trip to Pakistan · Presentation of findings · Preparation for fieldwork II	**Fieldwork II** · Data generation	**Data processing and analysis** · Data processing (together with assistants) · In-depth data analysis, incl. collaborative analysis with peers · Presentation and critical discussion of findings	**Analysing, writing, presenting** · In-depth data analysis, incl. collaborative analysis with peers · Presentation and critical discussion of findings in seminars and at conferences · Manuscript writing · Further field visit by field assistant for the collection of official budget data · Finalisation of PhD
Achievements/Outputs ›› Research proposal ›› Networks established	›› Official support by provincial and district governments ›› Networks & data	›› Transcripts ›› Preliminary findings ›› Research focus specified	›› Data	›› Transcripts, text fragements and documents	›› Paper manuscripts, publication & overview of the PhD thesis

Figure 2: Timeline with research phases and outputs

A **case study approach** was chosen in order to understand how people's daily lives and practices create differences concerning their involvement in development processes (see **Chapter 3** for reasons). Based on document analysis and expert interviews carried out during phases one and two, I built up an inventory of all development interventions being implemented in the Hazara region at the time. Out of 29 interventions, I selected one big, multi-sectoral, non-earthquake-related development project that was executed in several districts within the province by the Planning and Development Department of the Provincial Government. The project had been ongoing since 2001, and the total costs were budgeted at PKR 6069.3 million (equivalent to USD 98.66 million in 2001). The two main goals were 'poverty reduction in remote areas of the Province' and 'improvement of the status of women' (source: several government, donors and project reports). The project included both Governmental Departments and NGOs in its project management. While the Provincial Government coordinated the project from the district capital Peshawar, it worked with governments staff at the local levels, e.g. with forest officers and livestock extension workers at district and sub-district level. NGOs were integrated into the project only at lower administrative levels, i.e. at district and sub-district levels. The main purpose of the NGO's work was to 'mobilise the communities', i.e. to assist with forming and formalising community organisations, provide certain training courses to villagers and establish links between villagers and government officers.

All in all, I spent around seven months in Pakistan for my **fieldwork**. I spent approximately half of those seven months in the Hazara region. I travelled to Pakistan for two short visits, one in November 2006 and one in January/February 2008. The main fieldwork took place in the form of two longer stays: the first stay from August to December 2007, the second from mid June to mid August 2008. In these two fieldwork periods, I carried out formal and informal interviews and participatory observation with experts, villagers and above all with Pakistani development practitioners. I met and worked with development practitioners employed at different hierarchical levels, both within and outside the government structure, and with a range of tasks and responsibilities.

Getting **access to the field** – that is to ground personnel and their everyday practices in development work - turned out to be quite challenging. The following conversation, which took place early in the research process, illustrates some of the challenges:

Julia: *And, I would actually like to try to visit some of the communities during the next week. Do you have some staff who goes to the field and which I could accompany? Staff that goes on regular basis?*

Rashid: *We have. We have our Social Organisation Units* [SOU]. *In* [town A], *in* [town B], *in* [town C]. *In* [town A] *and* [town B] *two female Social Organisers were working with us. And there is also a Social Organiser. They're an independent unit. But female Social Organisers have resigned. They have joined other NGOs for good salary. We are giving them 15,000 PKR/month; other NGOs are giving 25,000 or 30,000 PKR/month. So naturally they will... otherwise they* [would] *work with us... So, a female Social Organiser will not be available here.* […]
But male social organisers are there. They can give you information, any kind of information for your research, your thesis.

Julia: *That would be very fine. So I can somehow contact this SOU and visit their office in* [town A]?

Rashid: *What is the day today? … But you have to confirm first here. Because they have programme. Field programme, different field programmes. Then I will ask them. So, we have to coordinate first… That 'Today, I'm going to* [town B] *or* [town A]'. *Because he will not be available in the office. So, that is the major reason. So any day you want to go, I will discuss with them and if they are free, they don't have any meeting with their community or anywhere else...*

Julia: *Well it would actually be interesting to go with them to the communities. So this would also be another option…*

Rashid: *You can go with us to the communities. But in the month of Ramadan, usually we limit our activities. Because when we go to the field we can't drink water, tea... so many things. So that is the reason.*

(One of the first interviews with Rashid[1], district director of the project, 27.09.2007; interview held in English)

The whole interview was about negotiating my access to the project and the organisation, including Rashid's and my roles and expectations. This can also be seen from the extract above. The conversation is about establishing hierarchies between me as a 'student' and Rashid as an 'expert' and powerful 'key person'; about negotiating access to fieldworkers *and* the village communities. When I ask whether I can visit the male fieldworkers in their office, Rashid mentions that it may not be possible because they might be in the field. However, when I happily take up the idea of accompanying them to the field, he withdraws this option by mentioning that the project does not have many field activities these days. The interview extract is also about marking authority and hierarchies within the project. Rashid makes comments about hierarchies related to ranks ('*you have to confirm first here* [at the District office]'), related to project organisation ('*We have our Social Organisation Units* (…) *They are an independent unit*'), but also related to gender. He automatically talks about the female fieldworkers when I ask to meet field-level staff. This relates most probably to the local gender order, in which I as a single woman am not expected to meet and travel with male strangers. Later, however, he brings up the option to meet and talk to male fieldworkers, probably constructing me as a 'Western' woman who can interact more freely with men than Pakistani women (see Papanek, 1964). And then, without hesitation, he attributes to male fieldworkers the ability to give me '*any kind of information for your research'*. In my experience, he would never have said this about a female fieldworker. During my fieldwork, I was only ever referred to female fieldworkers with the comment that they could tell me everything about *women*'s issues.

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

In general, negotiating access was an ongoing task throughout every phase of my fieldwork period. The relationship with project staff became more problematic towards the end of the second field trip. I experienced mistrust from higher-level project staff. They seemed to be suspicious about my research and tried to keep control of my activities in project offices and the villages where they worked. This can be seen in the reply I received from a field-level employee when I asked for contact details of project staff: '*It is not good, if I give you the contacts. It should come from the higher-ups...*' (Kasim, male Social Organiser, 07.07.2008). In the end, I was not able to meet certain project staff any more, was kept waiting longer than ever and was denied information.

Practical challenges in my fieldwork forced me to use various **sampling strategies**. I mainly used snowball and convenience sampling to select research participants among villagers and field level staff (Patton, 1990). Gaining access to fieldworkers required a particularly large amount of time and personal investment. So I mainly worked with different fieldworkers from one project in one district. For the sampling of key informants in the data collection process and the sampling of material in the data analysis and writing process, I mainly applied a theoretical sampling strategy, as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1996: 148-165). Theoretical sampling is guided by an aim of *representation* rather than (statistical) representativeness. This means that, I was looking for different research participants and contrasting information revealing diverse aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon that interested me in order to give me an understanding of my research field. In a first step, I broadly defined the phenomenon as 'local development practices', before, in a second step, more narrowly defining it as 'gendered experiences of work environments in the development sector'. In both steps, I was interested in producing as many categories as possible, in selecting relevant issues based on these categories and in finding out about the specific relationships linking one category to another. By using this mix of sampling strategies, I was able to deal adequately with practical challenges.

4.2 Collecting and constructing data

The research process was characterised by both more and less systematic approaches to data collection and construction[2], as is common in ethnographic research (Crang & Cook, 2007:132)[3]. I required different types of data to be able to answer the research questions as described in the Introduction. One type of data I drew on were accounts of women's working situation in Pakistan and in the development sector. This data set was compiled by collecting **academic literature** on women and work in Pakistan as well as **official government documents** and **project reports** on the development sector focusing on the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province. This academic literature was collected by desktop research, whereas I collected government documents myself from a multitude of different offices in Islamabad, Peshawar and the Hazara region, at federal, provincial, district and sub-district level, helped, during a one-and-a-half-month assignment in late 2010, by a research assistant, Iftikhar Ahmed Ensari. Data collected from government and project offices mainly comprised budget and expenditure files, legal documents and project reports.

[2] I use the term 'collecting data' for data such as government reports and academic literature that was produced without my field assistants' and my involvement. I use the terms 'constructing', 'producing' and 'generating data' for data that came into being with, through and because of us – for example interview records and field notes. I do this because constructivist and interpretive paradigms conceptualise data, and ultimately meaning, as being co-constructed by different research participants (Helfferich, 2011; Ewing, 2006; Hammersley, 2010; Sökefeld, 2006; Wilkinson, 1998).

[3] See **Box 1** for an overview of data collection/construction methods used in this research and **Box 2** for information about specific data sets, data generation methods and analytical approaches for the various parts of this thesis.

A second type of data were various **peoples' narratives** of their experiences with **and explanations** of their attitudes towards gender, work and development issues. This data was generated through semi-structured and non-structured qualitative interviews and group discussions with people such as civil servants, local politicians, development experts, development practitioners and villagers (Helfferich, 2011; Flick, 2005). Interview and group discussion guidelines were prepared and adapted to each interaction. For development practitioners, the interview guideline included questions and stimuli such as the following: 'What is your job as Social Organiser?', 'Can you please describe the village Amda Bela?', 'What happened the last time you visited one of the villages; can you illustrate it?' During interviews and discussions at village level, I sometimes supplemented oral discussion with participatory activities. Such activities were meant to stipulate narratives and find an entry point for discussions. In one sample village (Amda Bela), I conducted a household listing, a wealth ranking and several village mappings. For the household listing I asked for information about each household (head of household, number of household members and their gender, language, occupations of household members, membership of organisations, etc.). With the villagers' help, (all) the households in the village were listed and as much detail as possible added. Additionally, I intended to conduct several wealth ranking exercises (Guijt, 1992; Grandin, 1988). Unfortunately, many villagers were reluctant to participate, arguing that they did not know the village well enough. There was only one woman with whom we were able to start doing a wealth ranking. However, we stopped the procedure because many women gathered around us and prevented any privacy and intimacy between the informant woman, my female field assistant and me. While the household listing and the wealth ranking were not useful, village mappings proved to be more suited to the context. They were accepted better by villagers and more informative for the research process. Mappings were integrated into interviews with selected male and female villagers (see **Paper II**).

Whenever the situation allowed, I recorded interviews and discussions as a basis for transcripts. I could record 46 interviews (varying in length between some 20 and 120 minutes). Of these interviews, 37 were transcribed. Only a few interviewees did not allow either all or part of the interview to be recorded (3 cases)[4]. On quite a number of other occasions however, I considered it inappropriate to record a conversation or to interrupt an ongoing interview and ask for permission to record. If conversations were not recorded, I took interview minutes and field notes.

A third type of data was **observations** and **experiences** gathered while living and working in rural Northwest Pakistan. I observed (usually unsystematically) what happened when I visited civil servants and development practitioners in their offices, during village visits and while interacting with other people. I also made notes about my observations and experiences. For example, I experienced how difficult and frustrating it can be to meet certain people from the development sector, and I observed how challenging and exhausting one of the male social organisers found the walk to a remote village. One important process for me has been to reflect on my experiences with certain gender-related issues such as mobility restrictions and work-related authority questions. The minutes and notes in my field diaries helped me to remember events, my own thoughts and to start interpreting certain events.

During my field visits in 2007 and 2008, I worked with three very different field assistants who also took part in co-constructing data (along with my interview partners and myself; Palmary, 2011). In 2007, I worked with one female field assistant[5], whereas in 2008 I worked with one female and one male field

[4] Interestingly, most female villagers did not refuse to allow me to record interviews and discussions, even though they were extremely reluctant at the beginning of the research. Some village women were afraid that I would broadcast their voice on radio, which would not comply with their understanding of *purdah*.
[5] This person was not available anymore in 2008. Therefore, SDPI and I had to look for two new assistants.

assistant at the same time. Their main task was to help me to organise the fieldwork in rural Hazara by assisting me in gaining access to the field and managing interviews and discussion. Sometimes they were instructed to collect data on their own. All of them were also requested to reflect their experiences during fieldwork by taking research notes and we often sat together to discuss our impressions and preliminary interpretations from the field. The first female assistant transcribed all the interviews we did together during 2007. Her willingness to do this was very useful for me since she knew the context and remembered the interview situations. It was not possible to have the audio files from 2008 transcribed by the field assistants who had been present in the interviews, and I thus hired an additional person to do these transcriptions.

After the two rather difficult fieldwork and data processing phases in 2007 and 2008, and a deteriorating security situation in Pakistan (and in Hazara in particular; see also **Chapter 2**), I decided to draw increasingly on data that I could access from my office in Switzerland. Therefore, in 2009 I started systematically collecting **job announcements** for social organisers, which I analysed and interpreted for **Paper III**. Similarly, I collected and used **academic literature** and **newspaper articles** available online to build my argument in **Paper I**. This decision to complement my own empirical data with other types of data was part of the iterative research process delineated above.

Box 1: Overview of methods used for data collection/construction

- **Participant observation** during approx. 7 months (1 week in 2006, 4.5 months in 2007 and 2.5 months in 2008)
- Semi-structured **formal interviews and group discussions** with people in whose knowledge I was interested because they were e.g. villagers, development practitioners, government employees, politicians, journalists, activists or academics. Some interviews included **participatory activities** such as mappings and wealth rankings. Of these formal interviews/discussions, 46 were recorded. Thereof, 37 were transcribed:

Villagers	22 interviews/discussions	34 respondents
Development practitioners	9 interviews/discussions	12 respondents
Government employees	3 interviews/discussions	6 respondents
Politicians	2 interviews/discussions	2 respondents
Journalists	1 interviews/discussions	3 respondents
Totally recorded & transcribed	**37 interviews/discussions**	**57 respondents**

  Non-transcribed and non-taped formal interviews/discussions were recorded in the form of field notes.
- Semi- and non-structured **informal talks, interviews and discussions** (non-recorded, written down as field notes) with villagers/townspeople, development practitioners, government employees, politicians, activists and academics

  These informal talks, interviews and discussions were very diverse. Examples are: *informal talks with development practitioners on the way to a community group meeting* and *discussions about local politics with a guesthouse owner.*
- **Collection of documents** (e.g. online job announcements, budget reports and project documents)

Some people participated in several interviews/group discussions.

See **Table 3** for indications on specific data sets used for the individual research papers. And see discussions in **research papers** for aspects of differences in interview partners' profiles/subjectivities.

4.3 Analysing data

As for data construction, I drew on both more and less systematic processes during data analysis. Multiple approaches were needed, because the various data construction processes produced, as Crang & Cook (2007:132) once described it, '*disparate bits of "data" made through odd conversations, first-hand experiences, fact-finding, referrals, collected bits of paper, sketching and photography, web-searching, reading and so on* (…) [available] *in multiple forms of transcripts, statistics, textual and visual materials, research diary notes and so on*'. Within these 'disparate bits of data', I was looking for contextual information as well as information about how people make sense of certain issues. The major themes presented in this thesis were identified during different

phases of the iterative research process, and they were elaborated using analytical techniques from Grounded Theory Methodology, discourse theories and intersectionality research.

At the beginning of each formal analysis phase, I used **inductive coding** and **reflexive writing** techniques most intensively. These were inspired by procedures that were developed as part of Grounded Theory Methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1996), in particular by open coding, memory writing and – to a lesser extent – axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1996; Muckel, 2007). I have taken guidance from Grounded Theorists because they have developed specific tools that help to engage with data systematically, increasing the researcher's sensitivity to data and making her/him better aware of her/his implicit assumptions. Open coding for example involves identifying the properties of a selected category and carrying out a dimensional analysis of these properties (see the example from my own analysis in **Box 2**). In this example, my aim was to understand people's concepts of 'careers' in the development sector, i.e. to look further into the phenomenon that I labelled a 'career'. I documented the dimensional analysis in the form of an 'analytic memo'. Memo writing is a tool Grounded Theorists put forward for advancing data analysis and making it transparent, and I found it very helpful in the early stages of the analytical process. The analytical reflections documented in the memo often provided the basis for further decision-making (such as sampling decisions, reading decisions and analysis decisions) or for structuring the research work (see e.g. the 'to do' note in **Box 2**).

Box 2: Memo writing as an analytical tool

Memo for the category "career"
Research interests:
What is a 'career'? What does a career look like? How does one make a career? What is needed to make career?

(Socio-geographic) origin
simple backward village — urban environment
availability of (girl's) school— not available

Family environment:
educated — not educated
open towards female education — not open
encouraging — discouraging

Family background/(class?):
wealthy — normal — poor
Pukhtoon — non-Pukhtoon

Performance at school:
pass with distinction — pass —not pass

School level attained:
no formal school attendance — primary — school-leaver's certificate — Bachelor's degree —Master's degree
with formal certificate — without
formal school attendances — informal school attendance — religious school attendance — no school attendance

Professional performance:
accept challenges — refuse challenges
succeed with challenges — fail with challenges

To do:
1. Ask additional w-questions: Who makes a career? Why does one make a career? With what results does one make a career? Etc.
2. Check other interviews for quotations under the category of 'career'
(…)

Some data was analysed through **deductive coding** following the structuration technique developed by Philipp Mayring as one of the techniques used in Qualitative Content Analysis (Mayring, 2010:92-109). Unlike the inductive-oriented techniques presented above, the structuration technique operates mainly through the deductive application of pre-defined category systems and focuses on summarising the manifest content of the material rather than analysing productions of meaning. I have for example used this technique to analyse job announcement in **Paper III**.

A second source of inspiration for data analysis was discourse research and the theorising of how to analyse the production of meaning (and thus reality) through systems of representations. This thesis has drawn on positioning analysis and language games as analytical tools from discourse research. I have used **positioning analysis** (Wetherell 1998; Bamberg 1997; Davies & Harré 1990) in **Paper II** to show how villagers, government officials, development practitioners and researchers mobilise (or choose not to mobilise) particular aspects of their identities in particular circumstances to position themselves in ways others recognise as legitimate 'development subjects'. And I have used **language games** (Mottier, 2005)[6] in **Paper IV** to analyse how female Social Organisers mobilise various discourses and establish relationships between different discursive elements when talking about their experiences at work.

A third source of inspiration for data analysis was intersectionality research and its nuanced approaches to the conceptualisation and analysis of difference. The main interest of **intersectionality analysis** lies in discovering how identities are being made, by whom and when (Valentine, 2007:15). I mainly used what McCall (2005:1783) refers to as intracategorical and intercategorical analytical approaches. Instead of rejecting categories generally – as it is the case in the anticategorical approach (McCall, 2005:1773) – I used social categories provisionally due to my aim of exploring relationships of oppression and privilege. Oriented towards the intracategorical approach, I for example took the category of 'Pakistani working woman' as an analytical starting point and analysed '*the complexity of lived experience within* [this social group]' (McCall, 2005:1774) (**Paper III** and **Paper IV**). Another example, inspired by the intercategorical approach, is my use of villagers' narratives in **Paper II** through which I documented '*relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions*' (McCall, 2005:1773). In order to do this, I had provisionally to adopt existing analytical categories (McCall, 2005:1773) such as women, men, rich and poor. Specifically helpful for my analysis were the description of identity constructions, the identification of symbolic representations and the exploration of relationships with larger social structures (Winker & Degele, 2009:79-86). As the first step in an intersectionality analysis, Winker & Degele (2005:81) suggest looking for pairs of opposites in subjects' narratives of their experiences. In **Paper II** I identified for example that village women refer to blood relationship when talking about the village, thereby differentiating themselves from those people who are not related by blood. Such systems of differentiation were identified in various sequences and used to analyse further interviews.

Collaborative data analysis workshops with Swiss PhD peers proved an important data analysis practice and these were integrated into the research process in order to address quality demands for interpretative research (Steinke, 2008). Interviews and texts were analysed and discussed together with colleagues from the University of Zurich and with peers from a peer-mentoring group. These workshops helped me to clarify my tools, encouraged me to be transparent about my analytical procedures and forced me to compare my interpretations with other researchers' interpretations.

[6] Véronique Mottier (2005) has conceptualised 'language games' as one aspect of discursive practices, which are used to produce, reproduce and transform ensembles of ideas, concepts and categorisations and through which meaning is given to physical and social phenomena (see also Hajer, 1995).

4.4 Writing data

Doing research, including writing scientific texts about the social world, is a practice that is, like other practices, embedded in larger power structures. This means that I am limited in the ways I can observe, interpret and represent what I perceive (Matt, 2008:579; Castree & MacMillan, 2004). Additionally, it also means that I exert power over the social world (e.g. people) by the particular way in which I present it. Writing data – or '*writing through materials*' (Crang & Cook, 2007: 150) – is thus both reflective and constitutive of social reality (Whetherell, 2001). Along with a number of challenges (see **Paper II**), this fact also provides a number of opportunities.

First, and in line with poststructuralist feminist demands, my way of writing data aims to counter an essentialised category of the 'Pakistani woman'. I specifically aim to disrupt the construction of 'the oppressed Muslim woman'. I do this by highlighting the diversity and differences between working Muslim women and by critically evaluating dominant discourses that constitute gender and class as central to the identity of rural Pakistani people. However, I do not wish to downplay forms of oppression that are specific to women's experiences. Thus, I also make strategic (and selective) use of analytical categories such as 'woman' (see **Section 4.3** on intersectional approaches to data analysis).

Second, I try to resist forms of epistemic authority in my way of writing data. Based on a poststructuralist understanding of subjects and subjectivities, I believe that I too am subjected to power structures. As a researcher, this implies that I do not claim ultimate authority or knowledge in the field I am writing about. Instead, I am open to reinterpretations of my stories by other scholars. Nevertheless, I have tried to lay open my positionalities in the research process by explaining my decisions (see **Section 2.1** and **Section 4.1**) as well as through how I write.

Third, I aim to produce my version of reality (or 'oppositional representation', Castree & MacMillan, 2004:476) in order to enlarge the discursive space available to (women) development practitioners. I do this by offering my own interpretation, by demonstrating how certain representations are made invisible by dominant representation, and by analysing how certain representations could act as resistance to dominant power structures. Although the account presented in this thesis is only one possible version of reality, it hopefully opens up new perspectives on issues of gender, work and development in Pakistan and similar socio-cultural settings.

One final remark in this section about writing data relates to the handling of quotations and informants' names. Quotations presented in this thesis are transcripts or verbatim notes of oral conversations. I did not edit them because English is neither the mother tongue of my research participants nor mine. Everything else, such as field notes and observational protocols, may have been edited. However, the names of the informants are anonymised throughout the thesis, as are place names where it seemed appropriate.

4.5 A methodological guide through the thesis

Table 3 provides a methodological overview of and guide through the thesis.

Table 3: Overview of data sets, methods used for data generation and analytical approaches

Chapter/Section Paper	Data set	Method for data collection/construction	Analytic approach
1 Introduction	Secondary academic and non-academic literature		Literature Review
2.2 The geographical context	Government statistics and reports and reports/articles that are based on the same data sets Constitution of Pakistan Other literature (academic and non-academic, above all newspaper articles)	Unsystematic and systematic collection of publications	Literature review; deductive coding
Paper I on the working situation of women in Pakistan	Secondary literature (academic)	Systematic collection of academic literature	Literature review combined with an inductive coding
Paper II on field realities in which Pakistani development practitioners work	Transcripts of 37 (recorded) and protocols of 7 (non-recorded) interviews Field notes 4 maps and 1 household list of one village	Semi-structured interviews with villagers, local experts and development practitioners, participant observations, village mapping, wealth ranking	Inductive coding; intersectionality analysis; positioning analysis
Paper III on gendered labour markets for development practitioners	22 job announcements Transcripts and protocols of interviews and group discussions with 15 social organisers (male & female) Field notes	Systematic collection of job announcements (advertised online) Semi-structured interviews, group discussions, informal conversations, participant observation	Deductive coding; inductive coding
Paper IV on women development practitioners' negotiations of gender relations	Transcripts and protocols of interviews with 7 female Social Organisers (Information from other interviews as contrast) Field notes	Semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, participant observation	Inductive coding; deductive coding; language games

5 The research papers in a nutshell – their aims and results

The four research papers in **Part II** constitute the core of the thesis. **Paper I** has been submitted to Women's Studies International Forum and is currently going through a double-blind peer-review process. **Paper II** has been submitted to the Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, where papers are also reviewed by at least two anonymous reviewers. **Paper III** is currently in print at the Journal of Workplace Rights after a single-blind peer-review process. A first revision of **Paper IV** has been re-submitted to the Gender, Work and Organization journal, which has a double-blind peer-review process.

5.1 Summary of Paper I

Grünenfelder, Julia (submitted): **Discourses of gender identities and gender roles in Pakistan: women and non-domestic work in political representations**.
Submitted to: Women's Studies International Forum.

Paper I gives a historical overview of the links that have been constructed between women and non-domestic work from the 1940s until the late 2010s through 'state discourses'. 'State discourses' have been defined as systems of representations that have become powerful, or have the potential to become powerful, within the Pakistani federal state apparatus, and which structure the conditions for people's agency, at least partially. The paper intends to explore how different discursive spaces have opened up and allowed particular groups of Pakistani women to be considered legitimate workers. In order to do this, I collected and analysed existing academic literature. Previous literature had mainly focused on either formal regulations regarding women's work or – applying another epistemological perspective – on the discursive constitution of Pakistani women in general (with no particular focus on work). For this paper, this literature was read from an original research perspective, viz. with an interest in how the Pakistani state has been involved in constituting working women's subjectivities.

Reading the academic literature suggests that there have been three major ways in which state discourses have conceptualised Pakistani women's non-domestic work: as a contribution to national development, as a danger to the nation, and as non-existent. The paper suggests that political conceptualisations of women's work as a contribution to national development were dominant during the independence movement in the 1940s. At that time, Muslim politicians created a discursive space that advocated women's participation in public life and thereby opened up the possibility that women might engage in political work in the public sphere. This contrasts with political conceptualisations of women's work as a danger to the nation, which were, for example, dominant during the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988). Back then, Pakistani politicians accused working women of destroying national as well as Muslim and family values due to their loose morals. This narrowed the discursive space considerably and only few types of work, such as teaching and nursing, were considered appropriate for women. Even though state discourses portraying women's economic engagement as a source of national development have become more dominant again since the 1990s, some politicians still seek to narrow the discursive space for working women by calling their activities un-Islamic. The paper also suggests that state discourses have played a part in rendering certain types of Pakistani women's non-domestic work invisible at times. One reason for this is that state discourses have mainly been shaped by men and women in a politically and socio-economically elitist, urban-based, ethnic and religious majority position. As a consequence, women's work in agriculture and their home-based work have been excluded from national labour laws until today (2011).

The paper concludes that state discourses between the 1940s and the early 2010s (as presented in the literature) have positioned 'working women' in relation to an ideal 'Pakistani woman' in various ways. At certain junctures, state discourses have imagined 'working women' as acceptable or even appreciated 'Pakistani women', while at others, 'working women' have instead been envisaged as imperfect 'Pakistani women'. Sometimes, state discourses have completely omitted to position 'working women' explicitly in relation to an ideal 'Pakistani woman'. Further, existing literature on Pakistan suggests that state discourses have often, in a variety of ways, drawn on 'Muslim-ness' to legitimate gendered work arrangements and to contrast work arrangements with a 'Western' order of things. This highlights the fact that the state of Pakistan, through social attributions of gender identities, has been implicated in the normative ordering of work.

5.2 Summary of Paper II

Grünenfelder, Julia (submitted): **Understanding and describing complex field realities: the value of 'subject positions'**.
Submitted to: Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography

Paper II illustrates the social complexity confronting male and female development practitioners in northwest Pakistan when they work in villages. Analysis of empirically generated data shows that various local informants – through their descriptions – generate different versions of a specific village (Amda Bela) and in particular its inhabitants. Informed by positioning analysis, the paper uses the concept of 'subject positions' (that is, the different positions available to a subject within a discursive space) to analyse the range of perspectives. By exploring informants' subject positions and their resulting stories, the paper aims to understand complex field realities better and use these insights to describe a village in an academic paper.

In their descriptions, informants draw on a range of social categories that are available to them to constitute themselves and others as eligible for development or, alternatively, as responsible for developing others. Educated local, but non-village-based, key informants draw mainly on class and development status to construct 'the local people' in a nuanced way that does not qualify everybody for development. These key informants characterise themselves (implicitly) as 'highly educated' and 'highly qualified' people, who work in governmental or non-governmental organisations and who have the ability and responsibility to mobilise the backward 'lower community' that requires developing. 'The rich', e.g. local landlords, are blamed for not doing anything at all for the backward areas. Inhabitants of Amda Bela village draw on class and development status as well. They construct themselves as eligible for development by presenting themselves as poor people who suffer from many problems and who are ignored by politicians and development agents. Some women draw on the social category of gender to establish their eligibility for development. They blame male villagers for not advocating women's needs adequately and, as a consequence, they make male villagers responsible for the lack of development in domains such as access to drinking water and the establishment of a girl's school in the village. Geo-political location, 'literacy', freedom/form of organisation, *biraderi* [clan membership] and kinship status are other social categories informants draw on in their descriptions.

The discursive inclusion and exclusion of certain groups of people can have real material consequences, as discussed in the paper. A closer look at three artefacts (a map, a village profile and a project document) that were produced as part of two development projects shows that certain (groups of) villagers do not feature in official project documents. The artefacts suggest that, due to their discursive exclusion, certain villagers are also excluded from development interventions and their material benefits.

The paper argues that 'subject positions' is a useful concept for understanding as well as presenting a village and its inhabitants in a differentiated way. By outlining subject positions and the discursive possibilities they produce, a village and its inhabitants can be described in a way that emphasises the socially and politically constituted nature of knowledge. This approach is a contribution to ongoing debates about the power of representational acts, especially in relation to geographical fieldwork.

5.3 Summary of Paper III

Grünenfelder, Julia (in print): **'A female ... will not be available here': gendered labour markets in Northwest Pakistan's rural development sector**. *Journal of Workplace Rights* 15 (2):229-251.

Drawing on Diane Elson's conceptualisation of labour markets as 'bearers of gender' (Elson, 1999), Paper III analyses the gendered nature of labour markets for Pakistani social organisers in the Hazara region (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province) by comparing job announcements and the profiles of employed social organisers. The paper asks how social organisers are hired, what they are expected to do from a professional perspective, what their personal backgrounds are and what challenges they face. It does so in order to discuss the ways in which access to these jobs is gendered and to contribute to a better understanding of the impediments to gender equality in employment in Pakistan.

First, an analysis of job announcements shows that the qualifications required for a job are high (e.g. regarding language skills and willingness to work in a gender-mixed working environment) and the rewards are low (e.g. in payment and social protection). Second, the analysis of employed social organisers demonstrates that there are clear differences in men's and women's personal profiles: women are for example generally younger, more likely to be unmarried and childless, and have different (career) plans for the future than men. Starting from a comparison of job announcements and the profiles of employed social organisers, the paper then argues that women face greater challenges to access jobs, despite the considerable demand for women workers in the development sector. This argument draws on the finding that social norms regulate access to information, the ability to travel and eligibility for employment in gendered ways and that they therefore generate gendered inequalities for social organisers' access to and continuation in the labour market.

Finally, the paper discusses what could be done to improve female social organisers' working conditions. Based on an equality approach, it suggests that employers must urgently integrate protective measures, such as maternity leave, into contracts to enable women in particular to continue work irrespective of their wish to become parents. There is also a need for innovative concepts to support women with regard to their accommodation needs – for example the provision of women's hostels in cooperation with a group of other NGOs. Furthermore, the paper suggests that women themselves establish professional networks and mentoring schemes to support each other. However, this should not relieve male work colleagues and superiors of their responsibility to support women in advancing their careers. Lastly, the paper suggests raising awareness among work teams that gender equality is not simply about improving the situation of women but also about changing the relationship between men and women. In conclusion, the paper calls for the abolition of discriminatory practices that inhibit women's employment and economic activities, yet it also calls for a careful engagement with the two existing approaches to thinking about gender: the one that perceives women and men as essentially different, and the one that perceives them as equal human beings.

5.4 Summary of Paper IV

Grünenfelder, Julia (first revision in review): **Negotiating gender relations: Muslim women and formal employment in Pakistan's rural development sector**.
Submitted to: Gender, Work & Organization.

Paper IV explores how Pakistani female development practitioners experience their work situations, which are shaped both by local socio-cultural norms and globalised development agendas. One reason for this research interest is that new employment opportunities have been created for well-educated Pakistani women due to a demand for female development practitioners to work in remote, rural areas of Pakistan. Through its focus, the paper aims to reveal some of the complexities, diversities and ambiguities in professional Muslim women's lives.

The paper argues that the female development practitioner interviewed are exposed to different expectations regarding their gender behaviour and that they therefore develop 'physical strategies' on the one hand and 'discursive strategies' on the other in order to negotiate gender relations in a way that allows them to engage in formal employment. Women need to apply 'physical strategies' such as working in women-only office rooms, being in male team-mates' company when establishing contact with and visiting rural communities, and returning home early from field visits. However, besides adopting 'physical strategies', women additionally use *language games* as 'discursive strategies' to establish themselves as legitimate workers. One of these 'discursive strategies' is the *language game* of 'being a modest and decent Muslim woman' that draws on discourses of gender difference, financial necessity and modesty in order to establish female development practitioners as legitimate workers. Another *language game* – 'the jungly others' – draws on discourses of gender equality, rural/urban dichotomy and education. These findings add to previous research on Pakistani working women's strategies for reconciling employment and modesty.

In conclusion, this paper discusses the need to expose women's implications in diverse relations of powers, such as gender and rural-urban relations, and it supports Ruth Pearson's argument that women's participation in paid employment will not automatically lead to gender equality and women's empowerment (Pearson, 2004). The paper further questions whether South Asian women, who are expected to enter formal labour markets in increasing numbers, will be able to manage controversial discourses of gender relations in a way that allows them to remain in employment. Lastly, while the paper acknowledges the development sector as a key site for negotiations of contested gender norms, it demands that women like men should be able to benefit from development interventions.

6 Conclusion and outlook

This research project was basically inspired by two observations (see **Introduction**): first, that the development sector in general, and social organisation in particular, have become new occupational fields for well-educated, mainly middle-class Pakistani women; second, that the development sector is highly contested and development practitioners often seem to lack societal acceptance, this being particularly true of Pakistani women workers. This thesis has adopted a research perspective that draws on poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial theories (see **Chapter 3**). Based on such theories, power has been conceptualised as being dispersed and immanent in all social interactions, knowledge as partial and situated, and identities as complex and fluid. These conceptualisations of power, knowledge and identities have guided the research questions and methodology in a direction that is fairly rare and novel for (empirical) research on Pakistan.

The value of a research perspective informed by poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial theories

The research perspective outlined in **Chapter 3** proved useful to this research project because it offered guidance on how to link women's 'individual' experiences to larger 'societal' power structures. The framework allowed and encouraged me to conceptualise women (and 'subjects' in general) as active agents, without any need to deny the constraining effects of social structures on their agency. At the same time, I could conceptualise subjects and social structures as fluid, multiple and contingent on time and space, and therefore changeable. This opened up opportunities to question the normalisation of certain categories, for example the categories of the 'Pakistani woman' and the 'working woman'. Specifically, **Paper I**, **Paper III** and **Paper IV** show that Pakistani women workers' diverse positionings within larger societal structures shape their experiences of – and possibilities to negotiate – their work environments. Similarly, women's experiences and negotiations of their working environments provide insights into how they are positioned within larger societal structures. **Paper I** showed that Pakistani politicians at national level combined various elements of gender, nationhood, Islam and 'development' discourses throughout history to constitute the ideal 'Pakistani woman', and by doing so they shaped fluid discursive spaces. Women's possibilities to negotiate an engagement in non-domestic work have been dependent on how Pakistani women and Pakistani working women position themselves within these discursive spaces. **Paper III** used an example from northwest Pakistan to show that social norms position certain groups of people as legitimate and others as illegitimate development workers. Since social norms such as gender norms are inscribed in labour markets (Elson, 1999), labour markets themselves have the potential to reproduce and reconfigure social power relations such as gender, age and marital status. In the labour market for social organisers in northwest Pakistan, male and female employees have significantly different possibilities for negotiating work contexts. **Paper IV** shows that Pakistani female development practitioners make significant efforts to put themselves in a position from which they can act as socially accepted woman workers. Due to the (gendered) challenges that these women experience in their work contexts, they have developed physical as well as discursive strategies drawing on broader discourses in order to be able to work. **Paper II** complements the other papers by showing that villagers' experiences and negotiations of development are also shaped by a multitude of complex positionings within larger societal structures. By drawing for example on class, development status and gender discourses, villagers position themselves as legitimate development subjects in order to gain access to development interventions. These broader societal discourses enable them (at least to a certain extent) to manage their identities vis-à-vis development practitioners flexibly and to stake a claim to development interventions.

The research perspective has also been useful because it forced me as researcher to become aware of my own implication in power relations and of its consequences for the production of data and knowledge. How villagers (in **Paper II**) and women development practitioners (in **Paper IV**) positioned themselves was influenced by my presence and by the research context. This is based on the understanding that data is co-produced in our interactions (Helfferich, 2011; Ewing, 2006; Hammersley, 2010; Sökefeld, 2006; Wilkinson, 1998). I have shown in these papers how such data can be used meaningfully if we are aware that it is a situational accomplishment. While Syed & Ali (2011) complain that gender scholarship continues to be dominated by Western paradigms, I think that a research perspective like the one outlined in this thesis – which may be considered 'Western' because of its links to influential 'Western' thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler (see **Chapter 3**) – has the potential to deal productively with imperialism and the *white woman's burden* in development research. The mapping of 'discursive spaces' (see **Paper I**, **Paper II** and **Paper IV**) proposed by poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial approaches should help to avoid stereotyping and gross generalisations of women as a homogenous group. I also find calls within poststructuralist frameworks that are similar to Jawad Syed's and Faiza Ali's call for more '*self-reflexivity, acknowledgement of the adverse aspects of one's social identity and interrogation of one's moral pre-eminence to build 'bridge identities' across diversity*' (Syed & Ali, 2011:361-362).

Sometimes, criticism is levelled at poststructuralist research approaches because they supposedly lack a political aim. I do not agree with this. Even though the aim of this thesis is to deconstruct social categories such as the 'Pakistani woman' and to reveal the complexity and heterogeneity of women's experiences, I have highlighted where 'individual' experiences are subject to 'societal' structures such as gender and class discourses. The act of portraying certain categories as socially constructed rather than as natural is very political because it offers opportunities to challenge these constructs at a societal level. Further, critical development scholars have been criticised for failing to engage adequately with policymakers (Corbridge, 2007). I agree that there is a tension between the aim of deconstructing identity categories and the wish to work for social change (that is, for gender equality in my case). However, scholars such as Macpherson (2011), McCall (2005) and Spivak (1985) have argued that a move from 'complexity' to 'strategic essentialism' is possible and necessary to achieve political goals such as the reduction of gender inequality. I have ventured such a move in **Paper III**, in which I have taken up a position that calls for social change in two regards – first, that women and men in villages should have equal opportunities to access development interventions; and second, that women who work as development practitioners should enjoy workplace rights that allow them to remain in these jobs and to be able to carry out their work on a long-term basis. From this position, I have discussed some policy implications and formulated recommendations (see **Paper III**). Considering my statements above, I would invite future research explore inequalities in Pakistan from the same research perspective.

The empirical findings in the light of debates on gender, work and development

From an empirical point of view, this study makes contributions to at least two areas of scholarly debate: debates on gender and work in an Islamic country of the global South, and, to a lesser extent, debates on development interventions and how they work on the ground. I will elaborate on these contributions in the following paragraphs. I will also suggest points of departure for future research based on the insights I have gained through this research.

Gender and work

The insights from Pakistan contribute to academic *debates of gender and work* in an Islamic country. I argued in the **Introduction** that there has been little research within a qualitative research paradigm on Pakistani female professionals to date, even though a growing number of quantitative studies have addressed issues of women and paid work. Quantitative studies have mainly sought to probe the impacts of different

factors on women's participation in formal employment. By contrast, this qualitative study has portrayed some of the complexities, ambivalences and multi-layered nature of women's lives and demonstrated that Pakistani women working in the development sector are by no means a homogenous group. Through its portrayal of women who work largely in rural areas, the study supplements previous qualitative studies that have focused on women working in urban areas (Mirza, 1999, 2002; Haeri, 2002; Syed, 2008b, 2010a). The women's work experiences presented in **Paper III** and **Paper IV** bring into focus the tensions and conflicts women have to cope with while juggling a number of identities and expectations, which include expectations of them as professionals, but also as decent Muslim women, wives and daughters. I fully agree with Shahla Haeri who highlights that '[like] *their counterparts in the West and elsewhere, Pakistani professional women have to reconcile their careers with their culture's demand regarding their duties as wives and mothers*' (2002:407). It is true that certain tensions are by no means specific to Pakistan. However, my analysis in **Paper I** seconds Haeri's observation that the Pakistani state has shown '*historic ambivalence toward the growing needs of its working female citizens*' (Haeri, 2002:407), which has made it particularly difficult for Pakistani women to engage in non-domestic work. It seems very likely that this has contributed to the low female participation rate in formal labour markets compared to other countries. As was argued in **Paper I**, the state of Pakistan, through the passing of gendered labour policies, has not only been involved in the structural ordering of work, but, through the social attribution of gender identities, has also been involved in the normative ordering of work. In its discourse, the Pakistani state has often and in diverse ways drawn on 'Muslim-ness' to legitimate gendered orderings of work. In this respect, Pakistan resembles other Muslim states that have founded their official discourses on religious elements as a means of contrasting their work arrangements with 'Western' work arrangements (Afshar, 1997; Yeganeh, 1993; Kabeer, 1991; Ong, 1990; Moghadam, 1992, 1988). Haleh Afshar (1997) for example argues that formal (state) discourses in mid-1990s Iran drew on the concept of gender complementarity to define women's position in the Islamic society and to reject Western feminism. She quotes Mohamad Hashemi, a Foreign Ministry official, saying that '[in] *the West the attention of women has been concentrated on equality and paid employment. This has proved extremely costly for the family and has created more problems than it has solved*' (Afshar, 1997:765). She contends that by 1996 the Iranian revolution has failed to deliver its formal promises of equality for women in the labour market. Considering that most of this research dates from the 1990s, it would be interesting to see more up-to-date research on how different Islamic states draw on 'Muslim-ness' in their political representations to legitimate gendered orderings of work. Additionally, it would be interesting to have more research on how non-Muslim states with highly gendered divisions of work – for example states such as India – are implicated discursively in orderings of work.

Another contribution to *debates on gender and work* are the insights into the working lives of (women) development professionals from the global South working in the global South. As mentioned in the **Introduction**, there has been very little research about this specific group, despite the growing interest in development workers' lives in recent years. **Paper II**, **Paper III** and **Paper IV** have shown that development workers of Pakistani origin are also entwined in postcolonial relations with their work colleagues[1]. My findings support and add to those reported by Celayne Heaton-Shrestha about (male) development practitioners in Nepal (Heaton-Shrestha, 2006). She argues that identity work is an integral and crucial aspect of development activities and that Nepali NGO workers' identities hinge on the constitution of beneficiaries as 'Other' (through selective highlighting and silencing of differences). My analysis in **Paper IV** adds to Heaton-Shrestha's findings by outlining female development practitioners' discursive strategies as an additional way in which they manage various differences. Western development

[1] See Martin Sökefeld (2005) for an insightful analysis of dynamic colonial and postcolonial relations of power (beyond the development sector) in the Northern Areas of Pakistan.

practitioners are also involved in the 'othering' of beneficiaries (see Fluri, 2011; Cook, 2007; Heron, 2007). However, Celayne Heaton-Shrestha argues that '[these Nepali field-workers'] *entire way of life (...) was susceptible to scrutiny and evaluation in terms of (high-caste) moral frameworks*' (2006:207) and that beneficiaries were less forgiving of a Nepali field-worker's transgressions of social norms than they might have been of a foreign aid worker's. My fieldwork experiences suggest that the situation is similar in Pakistan. Of importance to my work is Heaton-Shrestha's argument that field workers' efforts to construct themselves as progressive questions their morality – and thus their credibility and authority (Heaton-Shrestha, 2006:211). This statement touches upon a puzzle that has emerged during my fieldwork. In what respect are Pakistani female development practitioners role models and/or deterrents for village girls and women? At the start of my research, I was sure that female development practitioners, in their roles as employees in a modern occupational sector, would be role models, and thereby enlarge the discursive space of what is 'thinkable' as an activity for women in rural Pakistan. Observations similar to Heaton-Shrestha's have made me more reluctant. I thus see a need for research that analyses how different types of development practitioners manage differences (such as class and educational differences) in their interactions with beneficiaries, paying particular attention to the blurred boundaries between certain groups of 'beneficiaries' (such as village women who study at a university) and certain groups of development practitioners (such as those from a rural, lower middle-class background). Beyond the development sector, research could similarly analyse how women workers manage differences in interactions with women who do not engage in employment, and ask whether and how working women are role models or deterrents for other women.

Development interventions and their implementation on the ground

The insights into gendered work contexts in the Pakistani development sector also contribute to an *empirically grounded understanding of the impact of (women's) work contexts on development interventions*. In **Paper II**, I described the complex field realities in which development practitioners work. It is not at all easy for development practitioners to gain a picture of a village and of the structures that might stabilise or even increase certain social inequalities while a development project is implemented. In **Paper IV**, I argue that women development practitioners face a number of gender-related challenges in the workplace. Some challenges for women development workers are for example experiences of sexual harassment in the office and in public transport, and restricted mobility and interactions with the other gender. It has been argued that such restrictions in activity affect women more than men throughout Pakistan, (Hausmann et al, 2010; Shaheed, 2009, 2002; CEDAW, 2007), since women embody their family's honour (Pastner, 1974; Papanek, 1973).

I have discussed the (potential) consequences of gender-based challenges in development work in **Paper IV** and **Paper III**. For example, female development practitioners reported that they go home before sunset at the latest, since as women they feel unsafe travelling in the dark. This has consequences for development work, especially the fieldwork; commuting distances between the office/fieldwork sites and home are large and thus the time female Social Organisers spend in the field is considerably reduced. Another example of the consequences of gendered challenges relates to the choice of villages and building rapport with villagers. Since women are socially restricted from interacting with non-kin males, it is not easy for them to approach villages on their own. They often depend on male colleagues to accompany them to the village and establish rapport with male village leaders as a way of gaining access to (women) villagers. One important aspect of my research context has been accusations by influential local people that development practitioners, especially women, are agents of Western imperialism. Such attitudes have resulted in a number of physical attacks on women and their employers, making women's working environments challenging, stressful and dangerous. **Paper III** argued that this kind of working

environment makes it difficult for women to participate in the development sector at all, even though they are urgently needed. Women development practitioners are needed to approach female villagers and group them into women's community organisations, because gender norms restrict most local women from having contact with male workers. I argue that this challenging working environment, especially for female development practitioners, makes it very difficult to translate development interventions from policy into practice in northwest Pakistan. If women's posts remain vacant because nobody wants to do the job, then how can development interventions be (successfully) implemented? And even if there are women employees, how can they build rapport with village men and women if they are considered un-Islamic and immoral? However, the papers have sought to display the broad range of strategies women pursue in order to do development work. Based on my research experience, I call for more research into the links between challenging and especially highly gendered working environments and the 'performance' of development interventions – 'performance' in the sense of conventional development outputs, yet also in the sense of development interventions' ability to constitute new subjects (see also Heaton-Shrestha, 2006).

Equal employment opportunities

It would also be interesting to link the above findings to debates on equal employment opportunities (World Bank, 2011; Razavi, 2011; Syed, 2008a, 2010b; Syed et al, 2009; Ali & Knox, 2008). In **Paper III**, I have shown that – even though there is virtually the same demand for male and female social organisers – employers and female employees experience double binds in relation to equal opportunities. If employers in the development sector want to hire Pakistani women in equal numbers to men, they would sometimes have to accept less qualified women or women who refuse to travel frequently to villages. This in turn may have a negative effect on the work done with women villagers. Alternatively, employers could give preferential treatment to women, e.g. through higher salaries or better accommodation arrangements, in order to make the job more attractive to women and to be able to hire as many women as men. This would hopefully also be beneficial for village women. However, it would create unequal employment opportunities for men and women on the one hand and an increased financial burden for the employer for each woman he/she hires on the other hand. This last point is usually the argument employers use to excuse themselves from improving women's workplace situation. Working women and women who consider working as social organisers are also put in a double bind because they are, on the one hand, expected to work as professionals while also being expected to act as decent women who comply with certain gender norms. As has been shown in **Paper III**, professional expertise consists of the ability to travel to the field in order to interact with villagers, and to share and obtain information in villages, offices and other places. However, gender norms restrict women's mobility, their interactions with non-kin males and their eligibility to work. Thus confronted with different expectations, women find themselves in a dilemma, forced to choose between either failing to live up to professional standards or neglecting gender norms. While Ali & Knox (2008) described the contradictory implications of national legislation, this research has provided an illustration from a case study of the development sector in northwest Pakistan. It has shown that a policy of treating men and women 'equally' puts working women and employers in a double-bind situation that is in many cases disadvantageous to women. I would find it highly interesting if future research could analyse – based on Syed's critical assessment of the concept of 'gender empowerment' (Syed, 2010b) – whether and how Pakistani women who work in the development sector develop a sense of empowerment and how this is subject to relations of class, religion, etc. and to (formal and informal) legislation that reaches beyond Pakistan's national context.

Future research on Pakistani female development practitioners and the global 'job crisis'

While I have mentioned a number of topics for future research in the preceding paragraphs, this section proposes a research topic that goes beyond those suggestions and is less connected to the immediate findings of this study. Here, I suggest that future research might look at Pakistani female development practitioners in the light of the global financial and economic crisis that began in 2007/2008 and that has now turned into a so-called global 'job crisis' (ILO, 2011). There is mounting evidence that the impacts of the crisis have been unevenly spread between regions, genders and sectors. There is increasing interest in the impacts of the economic crisis on women, because women are more likely than men to be under-employed and employed in vulnerable jobs (ADB & ILO, 2011; Bennhold, 2011; UN Women, 2011; ILO, 2009). Women for example make up 60-80 percent of the export manufacturing workforce in the developing world, a sector that the World Bank expects to shrink significantly (UN Women, 2011) and they often work in insecure informal settings. Furthermore, high job losses are forecasted in the public sector which tends to employ relatively high numbers of women. In 1998, 35% of women in developing countries were employed in the public sector while the corresponding figure was 31% for the private sector (Hammouya, 1999:19).

In their editorial to a special issue of Gender, Work and Organisation on 'Public Sector Employment', Conley, Kerfoot & Thornley (2011) point to the importance of research that scrutinises equality in public sector employment worldwide. Their argument is based on the diagnosis that '*the current global squeeze on public expenditure comes on the heels of 30 years of using public sector jobs as an air-bag to cushion repeated economic crashes, and an even longer history of poor treatment of women in this sector*' (2011:439). While the special issue provides an excellent entry point into this debate, it fails to provide insights from the global South. Future research on gender, work and development could thus tackle questions such as: How do Pakistani women who work in the development sector experience the economic crisis in their everyday lives? What impact does the job crisis have on Pakistani women's career plans, in particular those of female development practitioners? How do Pakistani female government officers (that is, the management cadre of the Pakistani government) experience the public sector as a work context? How does the job crisis alter discourses of gender and work in the context of Pakistan? I expect such research to yield important insights into the gendered impacts of the economic crisis in the global South, in particular into the identity formation processes and subject positions/positionings of women workers.

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Part II – Research papers

Paper I

Grünenfelder, Julia (submitted): **Discourses of gender identities and gender roles in Pakistan: women and non-domestic work in political representations**.

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Discourses of gender identities and gender roles in Pakistan: women and non-domestic work in political representations

Abstract

This paper aims at exploring the manifold and changing links that have been constructed between women and work by Pakistani state discourses between the 1940s and the early 2010s. The main focus of the analysis is on discursive spaces that have been created for women who engage in non-domestic work. Based on a critical review of existing academic literature, this paper argues that Pakistani women's non-domestic work has been conceptualised in three major ways: as a contribution to national development, as a danger to the nation, and as non-existent. The paper concludes that, even though some conceptualisations of work have been more powerful than others and have become part of concrete state policies at specific historical junctures, alternative conceptualisations have always co-existed. Disclosing the state's implication in the discursive construction of working women's subjectivities might contribute to the destabilisation of hegemonic concepts of gendered divisions of labour in Pakistan.

Keywords: gender; work; political representations; Muslim women; Pakistan; development

Introduction

Nowadays, even though more and more Pakistani women take up paid work (GoP, 2009a), images of a modest and decent Muslim woman as symbol of the ideal 'Pakistani woman' impact women's working activities (Syed, 2010a; Ellick, 2010; GoP, 2009a; SDPC, 2009; Khan, 2007; Mirza, 2001; AUTHOR, unpublished). A number of researchers has highlighted that this current image of the ideal 'Pakistani woman' is heavily influenced by policies from the 1970s that aimed at locating women within the 'four walls of the home' (*char diwari*) and not, for example, in office settings (Shaheed, 2010; Cook, 2001). It has been argued however that the image of the ideal 'Pakistani woman' has been constituted variably throughout history, and that norms about gender roles – even though they have always played a crucial role in people's lives in Pakistan – have had supportive as well as restrictive consequences for women's activities in paid work (Shaheed, 2010; Syed, 2010a; Khan, 2007:8-9; Mirza, 2002; Cook, 2001; Weiss, 1984; Papanek, 1971).

This paper intends to raise wider critical questions concerning the links between gendered divisions of labour and the political construction of gender identities through an analysis of how state discourses have created possibilities for Pakistani 'working women'[1] between the 1940s and the early 2010s. While it acknowledges that a state is by no means a monolithic entity, it uses the term 'state discourses' to refer to systems of representations that have become powerful, or have the potential to become powerful, within the Pakistani federal state apparatus, and that structure conditions for people's agency (at least partially)[2]. Such systems of representations are produced for example through state leaders' and opposition leaders' speeches, policy documents, constitutional and legal frameworks, and educational and judicial institutions. Although in Pakistan, gender norms are widely acknowledged as a stabilising factor for existing systems of labour division (Rouse, 2004; Kazi and Raza, 1991; Weiss, 1984), there seems to be a lack of academic literature that analyses how the state has been implicated in the constitution of working women's subjectivities through a deployment of gender discourses. What exists are two so far unconnected bodies of academic literature that tackle the topic indirectly: First, there is literature that explicitly analyses how the state of Pakistan has constructed an ideal 'Pakistani woman', but this literature hardly discusses how non-domestic work is inflicted on these ideal 'Pakistani women'. Second, there is literature that discusses how state policies have affected Pakistani women's non-domestic work

[1] In Pakistan, as in many other countries, women who are engaged in unpaid domestic work have not been labelled as '**working women**', neither in everyday language nor in political discourses (Carpenter, 2001). Therefore, this paper uses the term 'working women' primarily to refer to those women who engage in **non-domestic work activities**, that is, in paid and self employment at home or outside home and in non-paid social work outside the boundaries of the family enterprise.

[2] Conceptually, this paper understands 'state discourses' as practices that (re-)produce broader discourses, such as discourses of gender and discourses of class. 'Discourse' in a broader sense has been defined by Michel Foucault as a system of representation that, for example, includes "*rules which prescribe certain ways of talking about (…) topics and exclude other ways – which govern what is 'sayable' or 'thinkable'*" about an something at a particular historical moment (Hall, 2001:73).

activities, but this literature does not explicitly analyse how such policies reflect constructions of a 'Pakistani working woman'. This paper aims at bringing together these two bodies of academic literature and read them in a new way, that is, from a post-structural angle, in order to add new insights to available academic knowledge on women and work in Pakistan.

The paper unfolds in four sections: First, it reviews the conceptual underpinnings that have inspired this research and explains why state discourses provide a useful analytical entry point for studying politics of gender identities. Second, it outlines how a corpus of existing academic literature was compiled as a basis for a literature review on the state of Pakistan, gender and work. Third, it illustrates the three dominant ways in which state discourses have conceptualised women's work and (dis-)allowed for 'working women' since the 1940s. Finally, it discusses that the contribution of the presented research and of suggested future research is in its capacity to recognise and destabilise images of ideal 'Pakistani women' that shape women's subjectivities in a hegemonic way.

Entry points for studying politics of gender identities

The present study as a whole and the literature review in particular have been much inspired by post-structural feminist and postcolonial scholars's work on politics of gender identities. Since the 1980s, post-structural feminist and postcolonial scholars like Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985), Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) and bell hooks (1981) have called for research that tries to understand how monolithic and homogenising categories such as the category 'woman' are discursively constituted in specific historical and political contexts and how such categorisations create authoritative images. They have encouraged attempts that analyse how various discourses intersect to constitute gendered subjectivities and that show what material consequences these constructions entail. In this way, they argue, it will be possible to disrupt hegemonic images and to make visible co-existing, alternative, yet less dominant images. A multitude of researchers has responded to such calls by analysing for example how social categories such as the 'third world woman' (Mohanty, 1991/1988), the 'Muslim woman' (Fluri, 2009; Cooke, 2008/2007; Abu-Lugodh, 2002) and the 'Pakistani woman' (Cook, 2001) have been constructed.

In order to study politics of gender identities, different analytic entry points have been proposed. Although scholars who build on Foucault's work have argued for a reconceptualisation of state**,** civil society and family as inseparable entities, differentiating the state analytically from other spheres is still considered useful in order to understand its role in regulating gender relations (Winker and Degele, 2009; Mottier, 2004; Rouse, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 1997; see also Evans, 2011). Since women often play important symbolic roles in societies, state actors have used the promotion of certain images of women to serve their own ideological purposes (Shaheed, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Kandiyoti, 1991). States are, even though not monolithic entities, locations of power that produce knowledge through institutions such as the political executive, legislature,

judiciary, and public administration (Jessop, 2009). Thus, while some researchers have rather focused on women's narratives and the question how women negotiate the category 'woman' in their everyday lives (Naher, 2010; Chaudhry, 2009; Hussain, 2010; Jamal, 2009; Besio, 2006; Saigol, 2002; Khan, 1998 for research on Muslim women), others have rather focused on state discourses and the question of how states deploy specific images of women to legitimate its policies (Rao, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Haq, 1996; Moghadam, 1992; Kandiyoti, 1991; Mernissi, 1987; Weiss, 1994). For the context of Pakistan, researchers using the latter analytic strategy have analysed artefacts such as politicians' speeches and historical documents on political debates (Syed, 2006; Ansari, 2009), curricula and social studies textbooks (Saigol, 2005; Naseem, 2004) and legal texts and institutions (Toor, 2007; Jamal, 2006, Imran, 2005) in order to understand how gender identities are normalised[3].

This paper takes state leaders' and politician's speeches and federal policies and laws (as they are presented in existing academic literature) as an analytic entry point to study politics of gender identities in relation to work. The next section will explain how state discourses were analysed through a critical review of existing academic literature.

The corpus of academic literature on the state of Pakistan, gender and work

This article's argument has been developed based on a corpus of academic literature that has been published in English and discusses gender and the state of Pakistan from various theoretical angles. Academic literature for the corpus was searched with BASE, Scirus, Google scholar and Google search engines, using the terms 'Pakistan and women/woman' and 'Pakistan and gender' alone and in combination with the keywords 'labour', 'work', 'employment' and 'politics'. Additional to these literature searches with keywords, I screened the reference sections of the collected texts for related work and, if any of the references matched, I integrated it into the corpus as well. Literature that contained relevant information for my research was arranged in a corpus and grouped into five categories that reflected the main content of the texts: 'state policies and consequences for women' (26 works[4]), 'discursive constructions of women through the state' (eleven works), 'women's movement' (eleven works), 'labour politics' (four works) and 'colonial state and gender' (four works). Since my interest has been in how possibilities for 'working women' are articulated in state discourses, I have neither integrated literature into the corpus that provided analyses of labour statistics nor literature that was on working women's personal narratives without explicit reference to state discourses.

[3] As has been argued elsewhere (Shaheed, 2010; Rouse, 2004, Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987 and many others) and will become clear in the following sections, identities in Pakistan have never been constructed on the basis of gender solely. Class, regional origin, religion etc. have been other important categories. However, the focus of this paper is on politics of gender identities.

[4] Each piece of work was assigned to one category only.

Through these searches, I compiled a corpus of a total of fifty-six works: forty-six journal articles, books and book sections, eight research reports, one special edition of a magazine (Viewpoints Special Edition, 2009) and one PhD thesis (Naseem, 2004). The literature was published between 1971 and 2010 and paid most attention to the periods of the nationalist movement (1940s) and Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1977-88). With respect to content, literature on the one hand explicitly analyses how the state of Pakistan has constructed an ideal 'Pakistani woman' (mostly literature categorised as 'discursive constructions of women through the state' and 'colonial state and gender'; above all Shaheed, 2010; Jamal, 2006; Rouse, 2004; Naseem, 2004; Cook, 2001). Yet these analyses hardly discuss how non-domestic work is inflicted on these ideal 'Pakistani women'. Literature on the other hand also discusses how state policies have affected Pakistani women's non-domestic work activities (above all literature categorised as 'state policies and consequences for women'). Yet these discussions do not explicitly analyse how such policies reflect constructions of a 'Pakistani working woman' and her relation to the ideal 'Pakistani woman'. By approaching the diverse texts inductively, the critical review has thus thought to generate new insights.

This paper brings together information from these different bodies of literature to explore inductively how the state of Pakistan has created possibilities for Pakistani 'working women' at a discursive level and how it has positioned these 'working women' in relation to an ideal 'Pakistani woman' from the 1940s to the early 2010s. For answering these questions, I am dependent on how the existing literature has presented state discourses. However, I have complemented the information found in the corpus with additional, recently published material in English that has been available digitally from non-academic sources such as governmental documents and newspaper articles. This additional material illustrates the different conceptualisations of women's work and their continuities until today.

'Pakistani women' and non-domestic work in state discourses

The reading of the academic literature suggests that there have been three major ways in which state discourses have conceptualised women and non-domestic work. I will present these three ways, which were elaborated inductively from the corpus of literature, in the following sub-sections. Although some conceptualisations have been as more dominant than others at specific historical junctures, different conceptualisations have co-existed throughout history. The three examples are by no means meant to cover all possible linkages, yet according to the literature they have been most influential in shaping Pakistani women's work activities, as will be argued in the following.

Women's work as a contribution to national development

Based on the academic literature that I reviewed, I argue that state discourses – at several historical junctures – have dominantly constructed Pakistani women's work as a contribution to national development and, in this way, established legitimacy for (certain types of) Pakistani 'working women'. I will provide evidence to this argument by discussing the role that has been attributed to women's work in different episodes of

Pakistan's history. I distinguish between women's work in the political, the social and the economic sphere.

According to Nancy Cook (2001:36ff), Muslim politicians – through their speeches during the Pakistan Independence movement of the 1940s – have created a discursive space that has opened up the possibility for women's engagement in political work. She and other authors (Rouse, 2004; Jalal, 1991) argue that above all Muhammad Ali Jinnah has actively drawn on women for the cause of independence. In his speeches, he advocated women's participation in public life and took along his sister Fatima Jinnah while rallying. In 1942, as an answer to a leading Muslim woman who inquired about the position the new state would give to its women citizens, Jinnah said:

> "*Tell your young girls, I am a progressive Muslim leader. I, therefore, take my sister along with me to backward areas like Balochistan and NWFP and she also attends the sessions of the All India Muslim League and other public meetings. Pakistan will be a progressive country in the building of which women will be seen working shoulder to shoulder with men in every department of life*"
> (cited in Saeed, 2007)

Jinnah supported a resolution for greater participation of women in Muslim League politics that was moved at the League's 1938 annual session (Ansari, 2009:1434; Willmer, 1996:580). This resolution was the basis for the formation of a central sub-committee for women and subsequently of provincial and district subcommittees, through which women could become increasingly politically active (Willmer, 1996; Hasan, 1981). According to the reviewed literature, privileged women, such as Jinnah's sister Fatima, used the space that was discursively created to actually participate in the **anti-colonial and nationalist struggle** as political activists (Ansari, 2009:1434; Syed, 2006:108; Rouse, 2004:19; Willmer, 1996; Haq, 1996:160ff; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). Such women for example took part in pro-League demonstrations for independence in Lahore during the winter 1946-47 (Willmer, 1996; Mumtaz and Khan, 1987:45ff). However, authors also point out that legal provisions for women's political representation remained minimal: The 1956 Constitution provided for the reservation of only ten seats for women in the National Assembly, and that for a period of ten years only (Mumtaz, 1998:364), and women's traditional activities as wives and mothers were still represented as their main contribution to the nationalist struggle: As wives, women were expected to influence their husbands and male relatives, and as mothers, they were asked to socialise youth into Islamic culture (Cook, 2001; Willmer, 1996; Hasan, 1981). This suggests that the discursive space for women's political engagement remained limited throughout the 1950s.

From the 1960s onwards, women's engagement in political activities was intensively debated around the question whether women were able and eligible to **lead a Muslim state**. Benazir Bhutto's election as Prime Minister of Pakistan in the late 1980s is a

ground for the assumption that there have been times when state discourses have conceptualised women's political work as a contribution to national development. Already during the elections in 1965, when Fatima Jinnah was elected as official candidate to run against Ayub Khan, a discursive space began to open. At that time, as still in the late 1980s, there was controversy over whether a woman can or cannot be the head of a Muslim state (Shaheed, 2010:853; Rouse, 2004:27; Haq, 1996:165; Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1989:60). While in the case of Fatima Jinnah, her candidacy was declared un-Islamic through a *fatwa* (a religious pronouncement, often translated as edict), in the case of Benazir Bhutto, a *fatwa* was issued stating that "*as the prime minister is not the emir, or the head of the state (i.e., president), who must be a man, but is rather the head of a political party, there were no gender restrictions on who could hold the office of prime minister*" (Weiss, 1994:439). At that historical juncture, the discourse that created this specific relationship between women and political work became so dominant that it was possible for Benazir Bhutto to be elected as the Prime Minister, notably the first female prime Minister of a Muslim state.

State discourses have apparently created another legitimate 'working woman' by representing women's unpaid social work in the public sphere as a contribution to national development. Several authors note that at the time when independence was gained and the State of Pakistan was formed, women's political activities were redirected towards public, yet unpaid relief and charity work in order to **take care of the many refugees** that came to Pakistan (Ansari, 2009; Rouse, 2004; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). Yet literature suggests that even though women in relief work were represented as contributors to national development, the discursive space for women and their work opportunities remained narrow. Shaheed & Warraich report that "[e]*arly on, the* [political] *establishment started distinguishing between those* [non-political women's groups] *undertaking activities seen as non-threatening cum nation-building and those considered too radical for the time*" (1998:274). According to them, only those women's groups who engaged in non-controversial social welfare activities received full government support (Shaheed & Warraich, 1998:274). Other authors add that the activities of the legitimate woman social worker were portrayed as the natural extension of a woman's domestic role, and in this way, the woman social worker matched with the conceptualisation of the ideal Pakistani woman as caring wife and mother (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987:52; Rouse, 2004:29)[5]. However, the produced discursive space made it possible that women practiced alternative identities besides those as mothers and wives. Taking a role in political work during the Independence movement and in relief work during the post-Partition period enabled those groups of women to gain experience in public life (Rouse, 2004:19).

In the economic sphere, women have gained an instrumental value as a means of **expanding the labour force** and **enhancing economic development** despite the fact that much of women's economic contributions have remained invisible in state

[5] See also Gul Aldikacti Marshall and Anu Sabhlok (2009) for an illustration how Turkish Islamist and Hindu-nationalist women become "moral subjects" through work in the public space, whether paid or unpaid, because they define their work as service to community.

discourses until the 2000s (Haq, 1996:160ff; see also last subsection). In the 1950s, during the process of formulating the 1956 Constitution, there were intense public debates about women's roles in Pakistani society (Ansari, 2009; Haq, 1996). A Charter of Women's Rights was passed to the Constituent Assembly by women activists that should guarantee Pakistani women, among other things, equality of status, equality of opportunity and equal pay for equal work (Ansari, 2009:1453ff). The public debates around the Constitution and the Constitution itself indicate that, at that historical juncture, it was possible to place 'working women' within the official framework of an Islamic Republic, at least marginally (I have argued above that for example only ten seats for ten years were reserved constitutionally for women's representation in the National Assembly; see also Ansari, 2009).

The process of integrating (working) women's rights into legal policies was continued under the military regime of Muhammad Ayub Khan during the late 1950s and the 1960s. With his attempt at rapid economic modernisation that included greater education for women and emphasis on family planning (Haq, 1996:165; Moghadam, 1992), he explicitly drew on discourses of modernisation. Anita Weiss argues that he tied his ideological orientation pragmatically to economic growth and viewed the promotion of female literacy as a way of creating a larger work force during times of an economic boom (Weiss, 1994:413/416; Weiss, 1990:440). The "West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance" was introduced in December 1958 to "*consolidate the law relating to the employment of women in factories in the Province of West Pakistan* [except the Tribal Areas]" (WPMBO 1958). The passing of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance in 1961 is regarded as a first attempt to provide women some form of economic and legal protection from their husbands through the regulation of divorce and polygamy (Weiss, 1994:416). Under the democratic regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto women's legal status was further strengthened: The 1973 Constitution urged that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex (Article 25), and in special reference to working women, that there shall be equality of opportunities for women in government employment (Article 27) (Haq, 1996:166; Weiss, 1994:417; Jalal, 1991:99). By the year 1975, all branches of the civil service were opened to women (Shaheed, 1998:444, FN16; Jalal, 1991).

Between 1977 and 1988, under the rule of general Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, state discourses that represented women's economic activities as a contribution to national development were drowned out by more dominant discourses that constructed women's engagement in non-domestic activities (above all in employment) mainly as a danger to the nation (see next sub-section). Only from the 1990s onward, state discourses that portray women's economic engagement as a source for national development have become more dominant again and seem to have re-established and increased Pakistani 'working women's' legitimacy. Two government acts, the "Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2010" (GoP, 2010b) and the "Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010" (GoP, 2010a), illustrate well that there has been a growing discursive space for 'working women' within state discourses in the late 2000s. The

Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2010 specifies what constitutes sexual harassment of women in public, private and workplaces and further increases maximum punishment for assaults. When the bill was introduced to the National Assembly in April 2009, it contained the following legitimisation:

> "*This amendment will not only make public and private environment safer for women but will open up the path for more women to pursue livelihood with dignity. It will reduce poverty as more and more women will get the courage to enter the job market.*
> *In addition it will open up the opportunity for private and government sector to get competent human resource and result in better production and quality services. The social benefits as a result of providing protection for women will become a major contribution to the development of this country*"
> (GoP, 2009b)

With this argumentation, the policy does not only recognise working women's economic contributions to national development, yet it also recognises working women as legitimate 'Pakistani women' through the joining of discourses on gender, nationhood, Islam and progress. This marks an important shift in the constitution of 'working women', since earlier, women's progress was conceptualised in terms of the nation's growth, that is, on the basis of economics and not of women's individual development (Rouse, 2004:78).

Women's work as a danger to the nation

The reading of the literature suggests that at other historical junctures, state discourses have dominantly represented (most) 'working women' as a danger to the nation and, in this way, constructed them as imperfect 'Pakistani women'. Before discussing the representation of 'working women', I will outline how the state of Pakistan has deployed women in order to construct and stabilise a national identity.

According to Valentine Moghadam (1992:39) and Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed (1987:48), women in general tend to become markers of cultural and political objectives in periods of political change or contestation. As Mumtaz and Shaheed describe it: "*History tells us that women are called upon in times of crisis, when social norms are forgotten and women take up arms, join the Red Cross (or Crescent), man factories and communications, and participate wholeheartedly in the national struggle at hand. But history also tells us that the moment the crisis is over, and the men return home, women are once again asked to take a back seat, to return to their kitchens and children. Motherhood is praised and women are told to revert to their earlier constricted roles"* (1987:48). It is thus no surprise that gender became a *public* concern in the sub-continent during the independence movement in the 1940s when women were constituted as symbols of national identity (Rouse, 2004:6). As Pakistan came into being with religion as its *raison-d'être*, the Pakistani nation has quickly been constituted as a *Muslim* nation (Shaheed, 2010). In nationalist rhetoric, discourses of gender, nationhood and Islam were joined to constitute women of the Muslim 'nation' as a symbol of

Pakistani identity (Cook, 2001). In consequence, women – as embodiment of national honour[6] – have been regarded as a central element in debates about what Pakistani Muslim-ness should mean and how it could be protected (Ansari, 2009; Toor, 2007; Jamal, 2006; Rouse, 2004).

However, Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed note that "[e]*vents following independence showed that while some of the leaders of the Pakistan Movement, notably Jinnah and his immediate companions, genuinely believed in the need to break the shackles of women's bondage, there were other elements for whom the participation of women in the movement had only been a matter of expediency stemming from a temporary urgent need*" (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987:48). Nancy Cook (2001:33) argues that even Jinnah – through his representation of Muslim women as "mothers of the nation" in the 1940s – constructed women an ideal identity as "*mothers and wives who nurture, support, socialise, and sacrifice for the good of the nation*". Zia ul Haq, during his reign between 1977 and 1988, similarly constituted ideal 'Muslim women' as biological and ideological reproducers of the nation, purporting that being wives and mothers who give birth to citizens and socialise youth into Islamic culture is women's main value (Cook, 2001:32-34).

I argue that, within such conceptualisations of an ideal 'Pakistani woman', 'working women' were mainly seen as liabilities to Islam and, in that way, as a danger to the Pakistani nation. Shahnaz Rouse (2004:29) points out that there have been times in Pakistan's early years when such different segments of society as the Left and the religious Right have used discourses of national identity and anti-imperialism to construct a good 'Pakistani woman' that excluded those who had achieved economic and social independence. The Left represented those as *"frivolous women, victims of the* ***consumerist ideology of imperialism***" (Rouse, 2004:29), while the Right charged them as "*being no better than* ***prostitutes, betraying their heritage****"* (Rouse, 2004:29). However, spaces for 'working women' within state discourses have apparently been constricted mostly through definitions of what 'good' and 'bad' Muslim women are. Most of the definitions have been connected to the debate about what is **(un-)Islamic**. Jamaat-e-Islami[7] denied women's engagement in politics until 1963 (the year when they supported Fatima Jinnah's candidacy for presidency as part of a coalition in opposition to Ayub Khan). The denial was based on the argument that

> "*experience has shown that adult franchise for women under the prevailing conditions in Pakistan has proved unsuitable for them and harmful for the welfare of the country. In Islam, active politics and administration are not fields of activity for the womenfolk*" (no indication about author

[6] As Rouse (2004:77) describes it poignantly: "*Honour and virtue were to reside in women* (…) *…what we are talking about here is men's honour, not women's. It was men's honour that was to be preserved via women; women were to be the conduits of its preservation. This was to be achieved through a tightening of scriptural practices and taboos, as interpreted by different figures*".

[7] Jamaat-e-Islami is a religious political party that seeks to establish a state based on the injunctions of Shariat (Nasr, 1993; http://jamaat.org).

and date [probably a Jamaat-e-Islami politician, in the 1960s], cited in Haq, 1996:166)

During the Zia ul Haq years (1977-88), gender, and above all sexual mores, became central to political discourses. The notion of a 'Pakistani woman' was "*replaced by an 'Islamic woman' who dressed in a particular manner, was educated – if at all – in certain subjects and segregated institutions, and was preferably silent and invisible. In contrast to national dress for men, women's 'Islamic dress' meant compulsory chadors for all government school students and teachers as well as women state employees*" (Shaheed, 2010:858). Within these discourses, 'working women' have been constructed as liabilities to Islam due to their **loose morality** that was considered to disintegrate national, Muslim and family values (Cook, 2001:33).

Based on such specific definitions of a 'good' Muslim woman, several political decisions have been taken that constricted the space for 'working women'. One of the first consequences that specifically effected 'working women' was the closure of both the Women's National Guard and the Women's Naval Reserve as early as in 1954[8]: Religious elements managed that males training young women for self-defence was defined un-Islamic and therefore dangerous for the nation (Shaheed, 2010:853; Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987:51-52). In contrary, the Women's Voluntary Service that concentrated on social welfare, received government support as it fostered the image of the Pakistani woman as a caring and charitable motherly figure (see previous sub-section; Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987:52).

In the mid-1970s onwards, the number of state policies that were targeted towards (educated) working women increased, however, they have rather regulated the **appearance** of working women than the type of work that was considered acceptable for women (Korson & Maskiell, 1985; Weiss, 1985). In 1979, female newscasters on state-run television were ordered to cover their heads with a *dupatta* [Pakistani scarf] (Weiss, 1985:874; Haq, 1996:166), and some years later, a government directive called them to stop wearing heavy make-up and experimental hairstyles (Korson & Maskiell, 1985:609). Female employees of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) were equipped with uniforms that were designed more modestly. While for television newscaster, no rules regarding clothing was issued for men, PIA ordered – along with the new uniform for the female employees – a nationalised uniform for its male employees (Korson & Maskiell, 1985:610[9]). Also women teachers and students were directed to wear the *chador* (shawl) while being in their classrooms (Shaheed, 2010:585; Haq, 1996;166; Korson & Maskiell, 1985:610). A government directive from 1982 said that:

[8] Both were formed in 1949 (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987:51)

[9] See also History of PIA (2011) for an overview of uniform designs worn by PIA flight attendants from past to present. The PIA uniforms have remained a matter of debate until today (see for example Daily Times, 2005 and PakTribune, 2005).

> "*The Federal Government has decided that in all institutions under its control, girls from class IX upward will henceforth wear a proper* dupatta *as head cover, rather than the thin strip of cloth which is generally in use at present. It has further been decided that all female staff in schools and colleges will be modestly dressed and will wear a* chador *over their dress*"
> (quoted in Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987:79)

Discourses that constitute 'working women' as a danger to the nation have provoked that women's work options have been curtailed at several points in history. Korson & Maskiell (1985:609) report for instance that a government directive in 1983 forbade posts abroad to single women in the foreign service. Only later, this order was extended to single men as well, yet it has not been enforced. Women's participation in so-called 'spectator sports' and in gender-mixed cultural performances was restricted (Haq, 1996:167; Korson & Maskiell, 1985:611). For example, the women's hockey team was not being allowed to go to the Seoul Asian Games in 1986, and it was questioned whether the sending of other women athletes (only four were selected at all) conformed to Islam (Mumtaz, 1998:328/349). Even though voices that try to limit women's working options have again increasingly impacted women's everyday lives in the 2000s (Shaheed, 2009; Jafar, 2007; DAWN, 2009, 2008, 2006), they have not (yet) become politically dominant in a way that they are transformed into national laws and directives.

However, discussions whether working women should receive support by the state or not have been vibrant lately, as can be seen at the example of the 'Protection against Harassment of women at the Workplace Bill, 2010' (GoP, 2010b), which was signed into law by President Asif Ali Zardari on March 9th 2010 (see subsection above). In February 2010, the press reported that male politicians and conservative groups had called the bill 'un-Islamic'. The reporter commented the following:

> "*In a television talk show, he* [Gul Naseeb Khan of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam] *said the bill protecting women from sexual harassment would only lead to the spread of vulgarity. 'There is no need for women to seek employment because the responsibility for their upkeep lies on the shoulder of men,' he said.*
> *The only two professions women can take up, he argued, are teaching and medicine -- and those are only if it is absolutely necessary.* (…)
> *During debates on the first bill on sexual harassment, all the mainstream parties rejected the amendment proposed by religious parties for women to observe an 'Islamic dress code' at workplaces to claim protection of their modesty.*"
> (Ebrahim, 2010a)

As can be seen in this statement, the discursive space for 'working women', even though narrowed considerably, has never been closed totally by such discourses that construct 'working women' as a danger to the nation. Intersecting discourses of Muslim-ness and gender create a small, yet more or less stable space for (at least) two specific types of 'working women' in response to the demanded segregation of society on the basis of

gender: female medical staff and teachers. Even though these two professions are commonly perceived as most acceptable for women, the requested segregation of society on the basis of gender has created a need for women in other professions as well. In the 1980s, when such discourses were very dominant, a presidential proposal suggested to establish a Women's University with primarily female staff in order to advance gender segregation in educational institutions (Haq, 1996:167; in Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987:86ff; Weiss, 1985:874; Korson & Maskiell, 1985:611). In 1983/84, separate courts for women with female staff were proposed (Korson & Maskiell, 1985:606; Weiss, 1985:869), and a women's bank was announced in 1989 (Khan, 2007:17; Weiss, 1990:444). Even the Jamaat-e-Islami's Women wing has formed a department for the issue of 'working women' (Jamaat-e-Islami Women Wing, 2011). In that way, a discursive space for 'working women' is opened up caused by the demand for a gender segregated Pakistani society.

Women's work as non-existent

In this third part, I argue that the reading of existing literature suggests that state discourses at times have contributed to render invisible (certain types of) Pakistani women's non-domestic work because state discourses have been shaped by men and women that have spoken from a mainly urban-based, politically and socio-economically elitist and ethnic and religious majority position.

State discourses in pre- and postpartition Pakistan have been heavily shaped by members of the English-educated, privileged upper classes in urban Pakistan according to some authors (Rouse, 2004; Rahman, 1999; Jalal, 1991), and thus, they have for a long time failed to recognise those women as 'working women' that have been productive members of the labour force in rural areas[10]. Rural woman who work on agricultural activities have not caused a lot of political debate, or, as Farida Shaheed put it in 1999: "*The leaders of the political discourse were notably not (and still are not) interested in the conditions of women working in the fields… Their primary concern, of course was how to obtain power and retain power. And women and gender issues were relevant only insofar as the issue was how to cope with (and control) the implications of changing social and economic circumstances*" (Shaheed, 1999; cited in Jafar, 2005:43).

The invisibility of certain types of women's economic contributions becomes apparent when looking at the state's practices of statistical representations. Rouse (2004:36ff), Kazi and Raza (1991), Maskiell (1990) and Afzal and Nasir (1987) show that in the past, women's work has been systematically underrepresented in official statistics, above all work that is done by rural and lower class women in agriculture and the informal sector. The authors explain for example that census takers often failed to interview women and to register women's engagement in irregular and cyclic work, and that the participation of

[10] In 2010-11, 75% of all (that is 12.11 million) employed women worked in agriculture and allied activities (GoP, 2011:22). As a comparison, only 36% of all (that is 41.73 million) employed men worked in agriculture and allied activities during the same period (GoP, 2011:22).

women in the informal economy has made the collection of data very difficult. Only in 1990/91, the government redefined the concept of 'labour force' for its statistic classifications in the Labour Force Survey. The new definition identified women (of age ten years and over) as "*employed if they engaged in any of the 14 agricultural and non-agricultural activities listed in the Intentional Standard Industrial Classification*" (PILER, 2007:46). Through the 'augmented activity rate', the Labour Force Survey now also registers activities in agriculture, food processing, handicrafts and others that were invisible for a long time. In 2010-11, men's augmented activity rates were only insignificantly higher than the standard refined rates, whereas women's augmented activity rates – 37% – were significantly higher than the standard rates of 22% (GoP, 2011:19).

Similarly, certain types of women's work have been rendered invisible by neglecting them in legislation. According to a PILER-report from 2007 (2007:44), all Pakistani labour laws excluded agricultural workers, informal sector workers and home-based workers at that time. These are the three categories of workers that are majorly composed of women. Even though a 'National policy on home-based workers' was drafted in 2009 (Ebrahim, 2010b; GoP, n.d.), it has remained in a drafting stage so far (Mustafa, 2011).

During the literature search I realised that while academic literature discusses the socio-economic (or class) and urban biases of state discourses about women and work to a certain extent (Syed, 2010b; PILER, 2007; Jafar, 2005; Rouse, 2004; Jalal, 1991)[11], it has largely remained silent about a possible religious/sect bias. As explained in the previous sub-section, state discourses have tended to construct the ideal 'Pakistani woman' as a 'Muslim woman' that could be judged along definitions of what is a good and a bad Muslim. Why has literature hardly talked about state discourses on non-Muslim (working) women even though authors suggest that, for example, Christian and Ismaili women have engaged differently in employment than Muslim women (Healey, 2010; Sales, 1999; French et al, 1994; Maskiell, 1985)? Has there been no academic reflection of such discourses or has there been no state discourse at all? Based on the reviewed and the encountered yet non-reviewed literature, it remains unclear whether state discourses have allowed Pakistani women with non-Muslim backgrounds to have different roles as workers than those with Muslim backgrounds.

Gender as a topic was largely absent also from literature on labour politics[12]. Candland (2007), who writes about workers' organisations in Pakistan and their role in formal politics, argues that women workers in Pakistan are not well represented in Pakistani labour unions. Agricultural workers, of which a substantial amount is female, are

[11] I was astonished that I could not find any references to women as agricultural workers in literature that discussed state leaders' speeches. Since Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a labour leader and a supporter of workers' cause himself (Syed, 2008), I would be especially interested in knowing whether he really did not deployed women agricultural workers in his speeches or whether this is just not reflected in academic literature.

[12] Therefore, only four works were included into the literature corpus (see "The state of Pakistan, gender and work").

prohibited from forming labour unions. It might therefore be possible that gender has played a minor role in labour politics with the consequence that women's issues were in fact less debated in Pakistani workers' organisations. However, it might also be possible that gender has not been adequately reflected in academic literature on the Pakistani state and labour politics.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop that currently, images of a modest and decent Muslim woman as symbol of the ideal 'Pakistani woman' impact women's working activities, the question emerges how Pakistani women who work in non-domestic spheres are discursively constructed as 'working women' and positioned in relation to an ideal 'Pakistani woman'. By bringing together and critically re-reading two previously unrelated bodies of existing academic literature, the paper has been able to demonstrate that state discourses (as they have been presented in the literature) have positioned 'working women' in relation to an ideal 'Pakistani woman' in three dominant ways between the 1940s and the early 2010s: In certain contexts, state discourses have imagined 'working women' as acceptable or even appreciated 'Pakistani women', for example because women's political work was portrayed as a contribution to the national development. This image was most dominant in official state discourses during the independence movement of the 1940s, during the economic boom in the 1960s and during the late 1990s when Pakistan for example ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[13]. In other contexts, 'working women' have rather been imagined as imperfect 'Pakistani women', for example because women carrying out work in gender-mixed, non-domestic work environments were portrayed as a danger to the nation. This image was very prominent during the years of Zia ul Haq's reign between 1977 and 1988 and has gained in influence again with fundamentalists' rise after the attacks of 9/11 in 2001. In yet other contexts, discourses have omitted the explicit positioning of 'working women' in relation to an ideal 'Pakistani woman' at all, for example because certain types of women's work, such as many agricultural activities, were simply not reflected in state discourses. Omissions have taken place throughout Pakistan's history because a significant gap still exists between people who participate in shaping state discourses within formal institutions and those who do not.

The state of Pakistan, through the issuance of gendered labour policies, has been implicated in the structural ordering of work, yet through the social ascriptions of gender identities, it has also been implicated in the normative ordering of work. The review of literature on Pakistan suggests that state discourses have often, yet in diverse ways, drawn on 'Muslim-ness' to legitimate gendered orderings of work. In this aspect, Pakistan seems to resemble other Muslim states that have grounded their official discourses on religious elements as a way to contrast their ordering of work with a 'Western' ordering (Afshar, 1997; Yeganeh, 1993; Ong, 1990; Moghadam, 1992, 1988). Moghadam (1992) for example states that after the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the subsequent Islamisation

[13] Pakistan ratified CEDAW on 12 March 1996.

policies, male and female roles were conceptualised as distinctly different, leading to specific consequences for working women: "*While women were not banned from the labour market, written permission by a male guardian was required. Women were barred from certain occupations and professions, such as judges, agriculture extension workers, mining engineers. Women singers were not to be seen nor heard on radio and television. A law was introduced limiting young mothers to part-time work only. Day care centres were closed down*" (Moghadam, 1992:41-42). However, the relation between the ideal 'Pakistani woman' and non-domestic work has been a contested issue throughout Pakistan's history. Even though some conceptualisations of women and work have been more powerful than others and have become part of concrete state policies at specific historical junctures, alternative conceptualisations have always co-existed. This paper has sought to make visible how the state has been implicated in the creation of conflicting and opposing conceptualisations of women and work. The historical overview shall help to recognise and destabilise images of an ideal 'Pakistani woman' that shape women's subjectivities in a hegemonic way.

This research has used, as a basis for its analysis, information on state discourses that were presented in existing academic literature. Future research could enhance the knowledge on the formation of Pakistani working women's subjectivities by choosing alternative analytic strategies. One strategy could be to use primary sources for the analysis of state discourses. Primary sources, such as historical records of state leaders' speeches and of labour union leaders, might provide answers to some of the questions that have remained unanswered in this research. Another strategy could be to analyse alternative locations where images of 'working women' are constructed and subjectivities are constituted, be it through the use of secondary or primary sources. As argued above, state discourses offer only one perspective on how working women's subjectivities are constituted. Based on an understanding of power as very disperse, future research could thus considered other analytic entry points, such as everyday conversations and bodily practices regarding gender and work in order to explore working women's subjectivities at a certain time in history. Several authors argue that the *social* implications of state discourses have been more powerful than the legal because discourses, for example, have encouraged the public to act as enforcers of religious mores and thus to control (working) women (Shaheed, 2010:858ff; Jafar, 2005:40ff ; Cook, 2001:35; Weiss, 1994:423). Scholars argue that this hand-over of responsibility from the state to the public has made it possible that numerous women were murdered in the name of morality by non-state actors and that culprits were never punished. Whatever analytic entry point is chosen, it is necessary to follow up how 'working women' are constructed and governed through discourses of gender and work and how the state of Pakistan is implicated in such processes.

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Paper II

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Understanding and describing complex field realities: the value of "subject positions"

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Understanding and describing complex field realities: the value of "subject positions"

Abstract

Describing a case study location has never been easy, yet the 'crisis of representation' in the social sciences established descriptions as an act of constructing social realities, which has further complicated the process; this epistemological turn has called for academic representations that make multiple realities and the researcher's interpretative contributions visible. Against this backdrop, the paper aims to abstain from presenting a univocal, 'realist' village profile and to portray instead a 'village' and 'villagers' in rural northwest Pakistan as they are variously evoked in local peoples' stories. The stories were generated during the author's fieldwork on development interventions in 2007 and 2008 through qualitative interviews, participant observations and group discussions. These were analysed using positioning analysis and with a thematic interest in the ways in which various local actors negotiate 'eligibility for development' and 'responsibility to develop'. The particular focus was on how people are included and excluded symbolically from development, and on these descriptions' potential to exclude materially certain villagers from development interventions. The paper argues that an analysis of people's subject positions from which they negotiate development is not only helpful for understanding complex field realities, but also for writing about a village and its inhabitants in an academic text. In its approach, the paper emphasises the socially and politically constituted nature of knowledge claims and recalls the power that non-scientific as well as scientific descriptions (can) exercise.

Keywords: knowledge production; representation; methodology; Pakistan; development; subject positions

Introduction

This paper arose from my planned description of a case study location in rural northwest Pakistan. This should have been simple: a description of the context, of a village in particular, where I generated data for my research on development interventions. Somehow this idea troubled me. What bothered me was the awareness that by describing the village and its inhabitants, I myself engage in (classed, imperial, racialised etc.) representations of 'the village', 'rural Pakistan' and 'development'. I exert power over people through the particular way I reduce complexity and present people, their village and their development needs in academic texts. Writing a univocal, realist village profile necessarily gives authority to one attempt to make sense: the production of academic texts involves politics that silences certain voices and their ways of making sense of the world, as has been argued for a long time by poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial scholars (Mohanty; 1988; Haraway; 1988; Clifford & Marcus; 1986; Gordon; 1980; Said; 1978)[1]. While some readers might consider this statement 'old news', Castree and Macmillan (2004: 469) argue that critical geographers should continue to take into account the substantial power of representational acts.

Recent publications suggest that there is a growing debate about postcolonial (development) research and methodologies. The Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography has substantially shaped it by publishing a number of individual articles (such as Robinson; 2011; Jazeel; 2007; Reid-Henry; 2003) as well as Special Issues such as those on geography and postcolonialism (Sidaway et al.; 2003), practices of fieldwork (Corbridge & Mawdsley; 2003) and postcolonial geographies of development (Power et al.; 2006). Within the general debate about postcolonial (development) research and methodologies, there is now increasing interest in representations and geographical fieldwork (Bissonnette; 2011; Uddin; 2011; DeLyser & Karolczyk; 2010; Jazeel & McFarlane; 2010; Ettlinger; 2009; Butz & Besio; 2009). A recent contribution by DeLyser and Karolczyk (2010) reviews how the *Geographical Review* wrote about fieldwork between 1916 and 2009. Based on their analysis, they argue that future fieldwork will have to "*embrace socially and politically situated understandings of ourselves in the field, along with understandings of how the "others" we work with position themselves socially and politically for our study (…); and our writing will have to explicitly reflect those engagements*" (DeLyser & Karolczyk; 2010: 472). Jazeel and McFarlane also warn against the practice of 'distancing', with which they refer to the turning-away from social, political and geographical context and accountability. As a result, they argue in favour of "*creative and generative representations that might be produced through more participatory and uncertain practices*" (2010:109).

I am aware that, as a researcher, I am part of the constructions of reality (through my presence in the field, but also through my academic texts) and that I bear an ethical responsibility for my representations (Jazeel & McFarlane; 2010; Winter; 2010; Law &

Urry; 2001) and so I aim to *experiment with an alternative way of describing my sample village*. Previous research has called for practices of performative ethnography, poetics and autoethnography as alternatives to practices of realist representation (Winter 2010; Jones et al.; 2008; Van Loon; 2007: 281-282). Yet what should one do if one does not feel able to meet the expectations that one should have a good command of the requisite (artistic) skills (Ellis et al.; 2010)? In this paper I explore a way of describing a village and villagers that made me feel comfortable and seemed to be appropriate to my research.

This paper draws a portrait of a village and its inhabitants in northwest Pakistan based on people's diverse and sometimes conflicting versions of reality and an analysis of the subject positions these realities relate to. Instead of describing that 'there are 100 households in the village' and that 'the village's main problem is the lack of access to a road', I let people describe the village and villagers themselves when they discuss 'eligibility for development' and 'responsibility to develop'. An engagement with representational practices will primarily add to the growing debate on postcolonial (development) research and methodologies. Drawing on people's descriptions of the village and villagers, I further discuss the potential material consequences of such descriptions. In this way, the paper also responds to McEwan's call (2003) for greater understanding in geographical research of the interplay between everyday discourses and material contexts.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. In the second section I present the conceptual and methodological framework. In the third section I describe my first trip to the village in order to give some additional information about its material context. Fourth, I show how different stakeholders' descriptions symbolically include and exclude people from being qualified for development. Fifth, I discuss how descriptions affect development practice and thus (can) have very real material consequences. I conclude with some thoughts about the usefulness of my strategy for representing a 'village' and 'villagers' in an academic paper.

Conceptual and methodological framework

The reflections described in the introduction and the following insights are based on a poststructuralist understanding that sees language as a social action that is constitutive rather than reflective of social reality (Wetherell; 2001). Language and how it shapes reality and identity are of key interest to poststructuralist approaches. Foucault's conceptualisations of power and knowledge have heavily shaped post-structuralism (Fawcett; 2008). According to the late writings of Foucault, power operates from the 'bottom up' and can thus be analysed through micro-practices or everyday social relations in their discursive contexts (Foucault; 1982: 791-793; see also Hall; 2001). In this paper, I aim to gain some insights into the 'micro-practices' of village descriptions in northwest Pakistan and to use these insights to present the village and villagers in this academic paper.

I draw on theories of subjectivity and the concept of subject positions in order to analyse from what position different people speak about villagers and the village, and how their subject positions influence the way how they represent villagers and the village. Different well-known poststructuralist, psychoanalytical and postcolonial theorists have questioned the humanist ideal of a fixed subject with a stable identity and replaced it with a multiply constituted, embodied, non-essential subject that is embedded in multiple fields of powers (see Nash; 2008). From a poststructuralist perspective, a subject is always already a discursively constituted subject that can take up different positions available to it within discursive possibilities (Wetherell; 1998; Bamberg; 1997; Davies & Harré; 1990).

Such an understanding of a subject is interesting insofar as it conceptualises structure and agency as a recursive relationship. Even though one only becomes a subject by being subjected by discourses, there is a discursive space within which agency is possible (Korobov; 2001; Foucault; 1982). Subjects – such as villagers, government officials, development practitioners and researchers in my case – can mobilise (or choose not to mobilise) particular aspects of their identities in particular circumstances (Nash; 2008: 11) and position themselves in ways others recognise as legitimate – e.g. as legitimate to be developed. In this sense, the poststructuralist framework calls for an analysis of discursive possibilities available to people and how they work with them.

This paper's analytic approach to the data has been informed by positioning analysis (Bamberg; 1997; Davies & Harré; 1990), even though it focuses more on how narrators construct subjectivities by positioning themselves in relation to other actors than on the interactions between the narrators and the interviewer as an audience. Reading people's stories, I was interested in how people named and labelled, i.e. in *whom the descriptions construct as qualified for development and whom they see as being responsible for developing others*. I explored the boundaries people drew between the 'Self' and the 'Other' in order to understand the subject positions from which people constructed identities. Additionally, I asked *what material consequences these constructions (can) have*. I posit that constructions not only have symbolic but also material consequences: speaking/writing can make someone else act[2]. In my case, I wonder whether descriptions have the power to materially include and exclude people from development interventions and, if so, on what grounds.

The findings presented in this paper draw on empirical data from fieldwork carried out in rural northwest Pakistan over a total of eight months in 2007 and 2008. Data was generated through qualitative methods, including formal and informal interviews, group discussions and participant observations. Interviews and discussions were held in English and – with the help of an interpreter – in an English/Urdu mixture, Urdu, Hindko and Pashto. Formal interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated into English; observations and informal talks were noted down in research diaries.

Travelling towards the village

It is a sunny day in November 2007, when Zehra[3], my female field assistant, and I travel to the village of Amda Bela for the first time. The village Amda Bela is located in the countryside of the Hazara region[4]. From the district capital[5], the village can be reached in approximately two hours by minibus. Coming from the district capital, we have to drive along a winding road up to the top of a pass, cross a watershed and pass a number of small settlements along the street, before we reach the busy bazaar of a small town that is the capital of the *Tehsil*. We pick up a middleman at the town centre. It is necessary to approach the village with an intermediary for the fieldwork to start smoothly. Since my field assistant and I are women, we can only access villages with a man, and we thus had to find a trustworthy and cooperative male companion in the previous days. Zehra and I finally found someone who is employed as an activist in the area by a Pakistani NGO. This person is a resident of a village in the same *Tehsil*, and – according to the NGO – is very familiar with the area. The NGO has never worked in Amda Bela village itself.

Amda Bela is located in the hilly lowlands of the *Tehsil*, next to a river. Together with the middleman, we leave the *Tehsil* capital and drive 5km towards Amda Bela. After 30 minutes we have to get out of the car and walk the rest of the way because the village is not accessible by car from this side. Once I am out of the car, I can see the village lying peacefully on the other side of the river valley (Figure 1).

Figure 1: View of the village of Amda Bela (Grünenfelder, 2007)

We cross the river, enter the village and start looking for local village leaders. Some voices and sounds are coming from the shielded courtyards; there is nobody in front of the houses and on the narrow village paths. We go on and finally arrive at the house of one of the village leaders. Zehra and I are invited to sit with the women in the inner rooms. We introduce our research project and ourselves and try to strike up an acquaintance with the women and answer their questions. In the meantime, our middleman is invited to the *behtak*, the visitors' room, where he presents us and our research to the male village elders. After a while, he convinces the village leaders to authorise and support our research in

Amda Bela. I am very happy about this, but I also feel strange, for I do not know what happened in the *behtak*. I was absent from a process that is of such crucial importance to my research. Nevertheless, we start speaking to various villagers, both women and men, and listen to their stories about the village and its inhabitants over the following days.

Talking about villages, villagers and development

"They just eat and drink and do agriculture": the 'highly educated' people and the 'lower community'

Before showing how villagers describe their village, I shall illustrate how local, but non-village people talk about Amda Bela and the wider area. The descriptions in the following paragraphs draw on interactions with key informants such as NGO workers, journalists, the District Coordination Officer (DCO)[6] and his Assistant Coordination Officer (ACO), the *Tehsil* Municipal Officer, the *Tehsildar*[7] and the *Patwari*[8], as well as with a Union Council secretary[9], the Union Council *Nazim*[10] and Union Council councillors.

It was very difficult to obtain an outside view of a specific village such as Amda Bela[11]. However, I did receive some information such as the following:

> *Amda Bela is a very good village. The people of Amda Bela are very nice, good with their guests, sincere and love to live in peace. So they are very nice people, and their one big problem is the broken bridge*…
> (Local mayor, 6 December 2007)

Key informants describe Amda Bela village as a peaceful home to three *biraderis* [clans] - the Tanolis, Pathans and one family of Sahib Zada[12]. The number of houses is estimated at around 70, and the houses are said to be grouped in scattered settlements on a territory of approximately 90 ha. The population size is assumed to amount to approximately 375 inhabitants. Key informants report that there is only a small community school in the village but no health facility, and that the bridge connecting the village to a main street is damaged. The broken bridge is perceived as a major problem for the village, causing severe difficulties for school children and sick people, especially if the water is high and the stream becomes impassable. People say that there are two community organisations in the village: a Women's Community Organisation (WCO) attached to a specific development project, and a Citizen Community Board (CCB), presided by one of the male villagers. CCBs were introduced by the Pakistani Government in 2001 as one of the means to devolve powers and decentralise development below the level of the Union Council.

It was far easier to talk to key informants about 'their area' than to talk about Amda Bela. Key informants use the term 'our area' for the place where they live or the area they govern in one way or another – either as bureaucrats, politicians or development workers – that

comprises several villages. They describe the area as inhabited by poor to at best middle-class families and lacking (properly maintained) roads and drinking water supply. "*The problem of poverty and unemployment*" and "*personal problems of individual villagers*" are mentioned as further challenges. They stress that male family members migrate to big cities or to the Gulf States "*because they don't have any other option*" or because "*there is no development*" (several informants, interviews 2007 and 2008).

The lack of development is attributed first and foremost to the poor implementation of development interventions. Other explanations relate to the inability of local residents to become active themselves and to local residents' dependency on development aid. When we look at key informants' descriptions, we see that they construct 'the local people' in a nuanced way that does not qualify everybody for development. An informant mentions three main types of local people: 'the highly educated', 'the lower community' and 'the rich'.

> *The people in our area are highly educated, and mostly the people are highly qualified and working in good positions. You will find them in many departments – in health, education, forestry departments. But the lower community, they do not have awareness and they have to be mobilized and everything has to be discussed with them. However, the basic problem is poverty. How are we going to alleviate poverty if a child is an orphan? And how are we going to bring him forward? It depends upon the community, and various organizations have to bring him forward.*
> (Local resident who worked for different NGOs, 30 June 2008)

The above statement illustrates how key informants position themselves in contrast to these 'lower community' by characterising themselves (implicitly) as 'highly educated' and 'highly qualified' people, who work in governmental or non-governmental organisations and who have the ability to mobilise and 'bring forward' the 'lower community'. The most striking example of such an act of categorising local people as 'lower' and 'backward' is the statement by a high district government official. When I talked to him about the area, he advised me to "*also check the colonial literature. The social attitudes and settings* [in the area] *are still the same*" (ACO, 19 November 2007). Yet there is also a third category of local people, 'the rich'.

> *The area is backward, they cannot go further and the rich don't care* […] *The major reason is poverty. The people must know the aim of their life, and then afterwards they will get into line. They don't know what they have done, what they should do. They just eat and drink and do agriculture. They depend entirely upon agriculture.*
> (Local resident who worked for different NGOs, 30 June 2008)

Although 'the rich' – e.g. local landlords ("*khans*", "*vederahs*", "feudals") – are considered to be from higher classes, their wealth and power is associated with backward, outdated feudal

structures. Informants blame 'the rich' for not doing anything at all for the 'backward' areas, whereas the 'lower community' is said to suffer so much from poverty that they cannot go forward on their own; they do not know their aim in life, they have no vision, lack motivation, depend on agriculture, are not educated and have no possibility to migrate. The 'lower community' are actually the ones that need to be developed and are also eligible to be developed by others.

This example shows how key informants draw on variable intersections between wealth and development status. When key informants use such lines of arguments, they either deny their own responsibility for developing the area, or else portray themselves as eligible for developing others, i.e. local, backward people.

"We are the ignored people": the 'ignored' and the 'literate' people

Villagers construct themselves as eligible for development by presenting themselves as poor people who suffer from many problems and are ignored by politicians and development agents. When I first met a group of women from the local Women's Community Organisation, the organisation's president immediately started to list the problems of the village and other women backed up her statements by saying: "*We people live in the most remote villages, so nobody likes to come to see our hardship. We are the ignored people*" (field notes, 22 November 2007). This is most probably related to the fact that they perceive me as a potential source of funding and hope that I, as an outsider, white and wealthy, might help them. Villagers have observed that outsiders usually bring 'projects' or even cash to the village. Even the Union Council *Nazim* explained to me: "*We gave a good thinking to our people, and we told them that if outsiders come to our villages, their purpose is to listen and solve our problems*" (UC *Nazim*, 6 December 2007). I would claim that it is due to these expectations that my discussions with villagers often start with villagers listing their problems and constituting themselves as eligible for development, as I shall show in the following paragraphs. I want to highlight that it is not just me as a researcher (although I am often perceived as development worker), but also, and above all, development workers who are confronted with such expectations when they go to a village.

Villagers, both men and women, consistently mentioned the collapsed bridge and drinking water supply as the village's main problems. One of the village leaders describes the situation with the bridge as follows. He had submitted a funding application and claims that a local member of the National Assembly promised the villagers money. Yet so far less than half has been released in a first instalment – and this statement is backed up by the *Nazim* of the concerned UC. The informant complains that the rest of the money is being withheld until the bridge is completed, so he had to invest his own money, which was not enough and led to work being interrupted (see Figure 2).

The example of the bridge shows that villagers draw on concepts of marginality and remoteness in two ways. First, they describe how they are cut off from the street and from quick access to markets, schools and health facilities, in a very concrete sense; but they also describe how they feel marginalised and cut off from power because they do not receive any financial support from the government or other donors.

Figure 2: The bridge under construction (Grünenfelder, 2008)

Another line of argument makes eligibility for development dependent on marginality, neglect and disinterest, but this time intersecting with gender. Village women say – regarding the other major problem identified by villagers, i.e. the difficulties with drinking water – that they have to fetch water from far away places at great physical cost and that for at least two months of the year there is hardly any clean water, meaning that villagers face considerable health risks. The women had requested a drinking water supply scheme from the development project working in their village, but they did not succeed. On the one hand, these women blame the politicians for the failure to develop the village.

> *Nobody bothers about our village. The elected members don't care about the development of our village. They just listen to our issues and do nothing.*
> (Female villager, 4 December 2007).

On the other hand, women blame the male villagers and make them responsible for the lack of development. Women explain that restrictions in mobility and social interaction with non-related male officials hinder them from pursuing their own interests such as better access to drinking water and the opening of an official state girl's primary school in

the village. Due to this lack of adequate possibilities and powers, 'women's interests' are expected to be represented by men. Yet women argue that men do not do this and that they are therefore excluded from development. Women draw on gender identities and dominant discourses of gender order (related to women's and men's tasks) to negotiate eligibility and responsibility for development.

Several villagers, often women, use their 'sense of feeling illiterate' as a way of defining themselves as eligible for development and to put the responsibility for developing them on the 'literate others'. '(Il)literacy' is a frequently used expression, but encompasses at least three meanings. First, research participants talk about 'being (il)literate' as a reference to formal education[13].

> Zehra: *As you told me that all of you* [women] *are illiterate people, then who can write your problems down on paper to send them to Nazim?*
> Secretary: *Just in yesterday's course,* [the development worker] *gave us this idea* [of noting down the problems and sending them to the *Nazim*]. *Now, we will figure out how and who can do this for us.*
> All women: [interrupt] *Our male members can write an application for the Nazim to solve our major issues.*
> (Meeting with village women, including the secretary of the Women's Community Organisation, 22 November 2007)

Second, 'being (il)literate' is used to express whether a person knows about certain things such as the procedure for applying to a development scheme. Earlier in the meeting, the Secretary made the following statement:

> *We can write down our big problems on a sheet of paper and give it to Nazim. But we are illiterate and don't know how to do all this. But I can tell you that there is some specific procedure for approaching Nazim. And we don't know that procedure.*

Third, 'being (il)literate' is used to express whether a person is able to interact with certain people. One woman, for example, complained about a sewing course provided by a development project, which she considers useless for her daughter. After her explanation she says:

> *Some people who are literate, they argue with the teacher, saying why didn't their daughter learn sewing after spending four months* [on a training course]. *But as you know, we are illiterate. We cannot do such things.*
> (Female villager, 4 December 2007)

'Illiterate' here does not primarily (or not at all) mean that people are not able to read and write, but that they do not have the skills to negotiate about access to development. This example reveals how different aspects of literacy intersect with gender.

Alongside the representation of villagers as poor, troubled with problems and illiterate, alternative representations exist of villagers being less qualified for development, which also shift the argument about responsibility for development. These alternative representations highlight the villagers' good living environment, the peaceful village life and villagers' diverse relations with the outside world. Some (male and female) villagers point to the advantage that they can lead a comfortable life in this place, enjoy the fresh air, the tranquillity of the countryside and the beautiful landscape. One statement by a young woman contrasts with previous ones, in particular the elderly women's complaints and descriptions of their problems. The young woman does not dare to offer *her* view about the village and the situation of its inhabitants to Zehra and me in front of the elder women, yet when she sees us off at the gate and is out of the elder women's hearing, she says, "*In this village, no one is poor. I don't like it when women of my village say that they are poor. This is an exaggeration of their situation*" (female villager, 6 December 2007). The young woman mentions that she is proud of the village as well as of the villagers. From this position, she actually rejects the claim that villagers from Amda Bela should qualify for development.

Villagers (of different clans and kinship relations) also draw on intersecting vectors of geo-political location and social organisation when arguing their eligibility for development. They compare themselves to other people, mainly with people in tribal areas[14]. People living in tribal areas are described as even more backward and less likely to benefit from governmental development activities.

> *Well we are relatively near to the road. What about those villages which are 10 or 12 miles* [16-19 km] *away from here, in the tribal areas, behind the mountain… Those people's life is very tough. They have no money and no food. They only have some buffaloes and that's it. There is no vehicle, no* [?], *no* [?], *no anything. Because most of the time there is snow. Those people do not come. Government aid is also very less over there. They only use the aid in Islamabad, in the capital, the capital only, just in* [the district capitals?].
> (Male village leader, 2 December 2007).

Compared to the people in the tribal areas, villagers of Amda Bela are described as 'free people'; they own a house and usually also a piece of land, or at least they are free to purchase land in the future, if they so wish. In Amda Bela, farmers do not have to work on a landlord's land and give him a share of the crop at the end of the season. These are the reasons given to explain why some people escaped from the tribal areas and settled in Amda Bela. In the example statement above, the male villager argues that there are other people who deserve development even more than the inhabitants of Amda Bela. Yet at the

same time, he accuses the government of not distributing money to the places outside urban centres and government structures. From this perspective, villagers of Amda Bela once more qualify for development.

"We have our own life and they have their own life": the 'rishtedar' [kin] and the 'baahir' [out-of-family] people

Drawing on clan membership and kinship status is another way in which villagers negotiate eligibility and responsibility for development. However, people from different *biraderis* [clans] give different emphasis to intersecting vectors. The Swati-Pathans for example describe themselves as qualifying for development because they claim to be the true villagers of this village. Based on blood relationship, the families of the Swati-Pathan *biraderi* produce and reproduce a common identity rooted in a territory. There are at least two contexts in which they draw on kinship as a unifying element. First, there is a story of how the Swati-Pathan *biraderi*'s ancestors came to the area and founded the village of Amda Bela as a home for their families. Second, although people from the *biraderi* are labelled as Tanoli on their identity cards, they prefer to use the label Swati-Pathan in everyday talk. While Tanoli refers to the place to which their ancestors migrated, i.e. to the Tanawal area, Swati-Pathan refers to the geographical area of Swat where their ancestors came from, as well as to the ethnic identity of their ancestors (Pathan). These two things remind them of their common ancestors, give them a common sense of belonging and history and distinguish them from the other people who live in the same village but do not belong to "them". This is also reflected in the statement of a male villager as he commented on the village map (see Figure 3) he had sketched for us:

> *The houses inside the circle are of the villagers, while on the outskirts are those who have migrated to this village few years back and they do not belong to the village. The village consists of the houses of our* biraderi*, who have been living here for longer time.*
> (Interview with a male villager of Amda Bela, 3 July 2008)

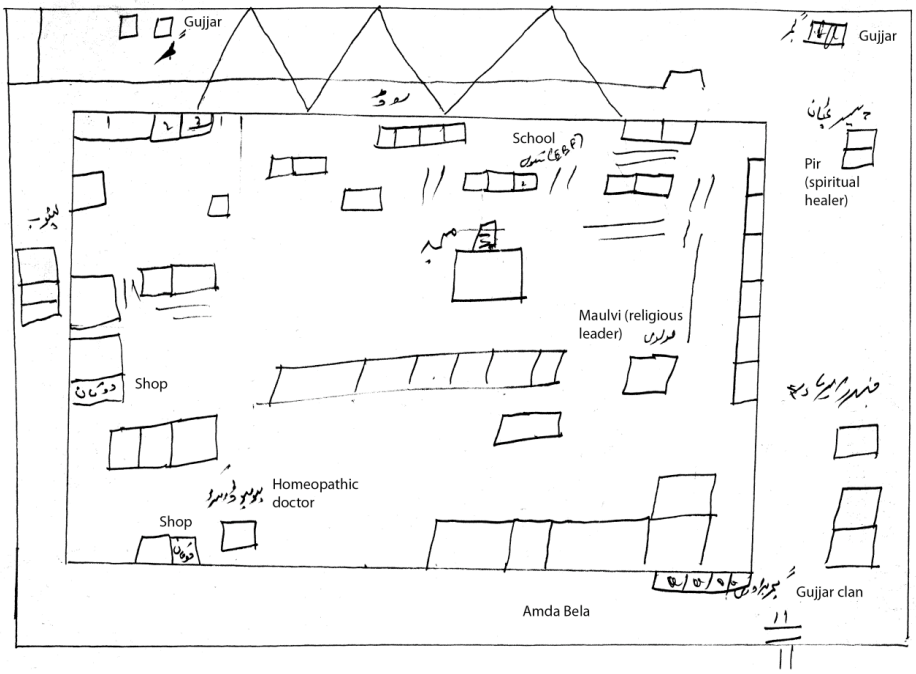

Figure 3: Village map drawn by a villager, 3 July 2008 (anonymised by Grünenfelder)

People's descriptions create a clear divide between the different communities in Amda Bela village. On the one hand, there are those households that belong to the Swati-Pathan *biraderi*. They are all blood relations of one kind or other; on the other hand, people of other *biraderis* also live on the administrative grounds of the village, but without such blood ties relating them to one another. Some of those households do not have any blood ties with other households in the village; others are related only to two or three other households. According to an elderly woman from the Swati-Pathan *biraderi*, there are "*almost 100 houses*" in the village, approximately half of them belonging to the same *biraderi*. However, there is some uncertainty or hesitation by the women about the definition of 'village' and the status of some houses. According to Lubna Bibi, president of the Women's Community Organisation (WCO), and the secretary of the WCO, around 50 houses belong to people who are kin, and those houses are definitely part of the village. The confusion – and not just for these two women – is with the other houses, the houses of the outsiders (*baahir*).

Zehra: *Do you know about all the houses of this village?*

Lubna Bibi (Swati-Pathan):
Yes, there are about 50 houses in this village.

Secretary (Swati-Pathan):
If we include the migrated houses, then it is more than 60, or it may even be near to 100.

Lubna Bibi: *By 50 houses I mean those houses of Amda Bela who are relatives and have blood relations with each other* [rishtedar; kin]. *In total, there are almost*

100 houses in Amda Bela.
(22 November 2007)

Also non-Swati-Pathans refer to differences within the village and in this way negotiate their status as development subjects. This is exemplified by a statement of a Gujjar woman whose family migrated to the village approximately four years ago and whom I interviewed in her home (Swati-Pathan women were not present during the interview):

Zehra:	*So the other houses are more numerous than yours and the other houses also have a blood relationship. Now, how is your life here in this village in the presence of those other houses?*
Gujjar woman:	*The only difference is that they have their own lands over here, but we are migrant so we don't have our own lands. Apart from this difference, we have our own life and they have their own life.*
Zehra:	*Any other difference among you and those houses?*
Gujjar woman:	*Of course they are rich and we are poor.*
	(4 December 2007)

By describing 'the others' as rich and themselves as poor, she marks the migrants/the Gujjars/her family as eligible for development. She works at positioning herself and others along intersections of clan membership, kinship status and class.

The non-Swati-Pathans give alternative descriptions and evaluations of the village's problems. Returning to the example of the bridge, we hear the complaint by a non-Swati-Pathan person that rebuilding the bridge is above all in the interest of one of the influential Swati-Pathan households. He argues that the male head of that household owns one of the two flourmills and since these flourmills are located near where the bridge is to be built, the mill owner has a significant interest in improving access to his mill. The non-Swati-Pathan person claims that the broken bridge is presented as the major problem towards outsiders because of that mill owner's personal interests and his influence as village leader. In other cases, villagers disagree about whether something is an 'individual' problem, in which case the respective *biraderi* is responsible for it, or whether it is a problem for the whole village. As a result, there is no consensus on who is responsible for solving certain problems. Several men who belong to the less influential Gujjar *biraderi* express their disappointment that they have not received any support from the Swati-Pathan village leaders. As well as complaining that nobody from the outside takes care of the village, these people also blame power structures within the village for the biased way in which problems are prioritised and dealt with. Here, wealth is brought into play differently than in the previous example, in which intersections between wealth and geo-political location were accentuated.

Descriptions' effects on development practices

In the previous sections, I have shown that within a certain space defined by development discourses, material conditions and individual subjectivities, local actors take up subject positions from which they speak and deploy identities, in some cases very strategically. In their descriptions, people variably draw on a number of social categories (Table 1) to negotiate eligibility and responsibility for development, accentuating a range of intersections.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

In this section, I shall show how the symbolic inclusion and exclusion of certain groups or people through discursive practices can have material consequences. In order to discuss (real and potential) material consequences, I present three artefacts from the field – first, a map of the village Amda Bela drawn by an unknown female employee of a local NGO (Figure 4); second, an extract from the village profile of which the map is a part of (Figure 5); and third, a project document of another NGO working in Amda Bela. The interesting thing about these three documents is the indications of *biraderi*/clan membership and the number of households.

On the map in Figure 4 we see two settlements and the indication that the village of Amda Bela hosts 70 households. Based on the villagers' descriptions presented above, I would expect that these two settlements are made up of at least two different *biraderi*. However, in Figure 5 it is specified that 100% of the inhabitants belong to the Tanoli *biraderi*. What does the official term 'Tanoli' mean? Does it include Swathi-Pathan, Gujjars and others? Does it only include all the groups on paper or also in development interventions? By labelling all households Tanoli, differences within the village may be obscured.

Figure 4: Map of Amda Bela village, drawn by an unknown female employee of a local NGO, 13 March 2008 (anonymised by Grünenfelder)

Total Population of the village: 1500 Male 680 Female 820
Total House Holds: 70
Literacy rate in the village: 50% Male 40% Female: 10%

Major Castes/ Baradries:

Baradry Name	Tanoli				
% in village	100%				

Figure 5: Extract from a village profile of Amda Bela, data filled in by the same employee who drew the map in Figure 4 (13 March 2008)

While in the case of the village profile, non-Tanoli people are excluded by the statement that the Tanoli make up 100% of the villagers in Amda Bela, exclusion works differently in a second case. In the document of another development organisation that is implementing a project in Amda Bela, the total amount of households (i.e. 100%) is said to be 45. This number contradicts the village profile above, as well as our own research. The development organisation further indicated that 26 of the 45 households (58%) are represented in the Women's Community Organisation that was set up by the organisation. If we consider that the total number of households in the village is 70 or even 100, the actual representation of households in the WCO is much lower than indicated by the development organisation

(37% and 26% respectively). The names on the member list further disclose that most WCO members belong to the Swati-Pathan *biraderi*. If development workers only count 45 households in the village, the chances are high that other households are ignored and do not have the possibility to join the WCO and to benefit materially from development projects.

Although I did not observe the interactions between villagers and development practitioners upon which these documents are based, I hypothesise that villagers' descriptions of the village played a major role in the outcome of development interventions. I assume that development practitioners based their own descriptions (see Figure 4 and Figure 5) on villagers' descriptions. From my own experience that the most influential male and female villagers are from the Swati-Pathan *biraderi* and that many Swati-Pathans hesitate to describe "outsiders" as villagers (and thus exclude them in their descriptions), non-Swati-Pathans are largely excluded from actual development interventions. Development interventions are often planned and implemented on the basis of village profiles (such as the one of which extracts are displayed in Figure 4 and Figure 5). Thus, it does matter whether certain groups, families and houses are registered in village profiles or not. I also know from observation that development practitioners, above all female, do not generally walk around a village in order to explore the location and potentially include villagers that were not registered in the initial village profile at a later stage. However, if villagers want to have a chance of benefiting from sewing courses, electricity projects or other development interventions, they need to be included in the village description made by the development practitioners.

Representational practices in the field and in the academic paper

In this paper, I have outlined how a village and villagers are described very differently and how this may have real material consequences. The case study of the Amda Bela village proved an interesting illustration of how discursive and material realities are connected (McEwan; 2003). People represent themselves in order to qualify for development and to benefit from related material outcomes. Yet, which people qualify for development depends on the emphasis laid on the intersections between various categorical differences. The same is true of the responsibility for development. I have shown the relevance of the discursive and material context in which people, including researchers, position themselves and others, and in which other people position them/us. Depending on the geo-political location of the village and the gender of the person, for example, it makes more sense to stress one specific intersection rather than another. However, I have shown that some discourses are more powerful at promoting their version of reality than others.

Regarding my primary aim for this paper, i.e. the *experimentation with an alternative way of describing my sample village*, I argue that 'subject positions' is a useful concept for understanding as well as presenting a case study village and its inhabitants. Based on

conceptual considerations that I explained in the second section, I chose a way of evoking the village and villagers rather than representing them in a realist, univocal description. Looking at the construction of subjectivities within a poststructuralist framework, I revealed the complex realities researchers and development practitioners have to deal with when working in rural northwest Pakistan (and elsewhere – see for example Lein, 2009 and Tembo, 2003). By displaying different, sometimes contested realities, I was able to provide a 'polyphonic' account (McDowell; 1994; Crang; 1992; Clifford; 1983) of the village and villagers that emphasises the socially and politically constituted nature of knowledge.

If researchers and development practitioners seriously recognise that power works at different levels, we need to question our roles in making certain representations more powerful than others. I have shown one possible way of representing data by making multiple realities and interpretive contributions – in this case: of the researcher – visible. Even though researchers and development practitioners always take part in the construction of realities by displaying certain perspectives and hiding others, I – like Winter (2010), Jazeel and McFarlane (2010) and Raghuram and Madge (2006) – perceive it as our responsibility to display multiple realities and, if possible, open up new discursive spaces to produce new realities (Law & Urry; 2001: 397).

Tables

Table 1: Social categories (and their dimensions) used to negotiate eligibility and responsibility for development

Social category	**Dimensions of the social category**
Wealth/class	rich – highly educated – lower community
Development status	developed – backward
	educated – not educated
	independent – dependent
	agri-based livelihoods – service-based livelihoods
	donor– recipient
Geo-political location	central – remote/ignored – in the back of the mountain
Gender	male – female
'Literacy'	literate – illiterate (ability to read/write)
	literate – illiterate (procedural knowledge)
	literate – illiterate (ability to interact with key persons)
Freedom/form of organisation	settled – unsettled/tribal
Biraderi/	Swati-Pathan – Gujjar – Sahib Zada
clan membership	Tanoli – Pathan – Sahib Zada
Kinship status	*rishtedar* [kin] – *baahir* [out of family]
	natives – immigrants

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Endnotes

[1] The work of ethnographers such as Clifford and Marcus has been a particularly significant influence on geographers (McDowell; 1994: 241). Clifford and Marcus' 1986 volume '*Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*' – in which they question epistemic and political predicaments of ethnographic representation – was one of the major culmination points of the 'crisis of representation'.

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of 'language games' and John Austin's concept of 'speech acts' (Potter; 2001) contributed much to the understanding of language (and later: discourse) as something performative. See also Moncrieffe & Eyben; 2007.

[3] All names are pseudonyms.

[4] Until 2000, Hazara region was an official administrative unit of the KPK, i.e. the 'Hazara Division' that consisted of the five districts of Abbottabad, Battagram, Haripur, Kohistan and Mansehra. Divisions were abolished when local government was reorganised. Hazara – the only part of KPK east of the River Indus – is situated north of the Province of Punjab, west of Azad Jammu & Kashmir and south of the Northern Areas.

[5] District is the label for an administrative unit below the Province. It is the highest of the three local government structures in Pakistan. Below the District, there are the *Tehsils* and the Union Councils (UC). In Pakistan, a village/*mouza* is a revenue estate and may encompass one or more settlements/*gaoons* within its territory. The village described in the text is of the size of a *gaoon*.

[6] The DCO is the highest and the ACO the second highest administrative functionary in the District. District is the label for an administrative unit below the Province. It is the highest of the three local government structures in Pakistan. Below the District, there are the *Tehsils* and the Union Councils (UC). In Pakistan, a village/*mouza* is a revenue estate and may encompass one or more settlements/*gaoons* within its territory. The village described in the text is of the size of a *gaoon*.

[7] Revenue administrative officer at *Tehsil* level

[8] Land record officer at *Tehsil* level

[9] Administrative officer at UC level

[10] Mayor of the UC

[11] I approached several governmental, non-governmental and private actors for statistical information about the area and the village Amda Bela. Unfortunately, I did not get much information, since most people were simply not familiar with the village.

[12] Those villagers who are labelled as 'Tanoli' by key informants (and in their identity cards) prefer to call themselves 'Swati-Pathan'. Those who are labelled as 'Pathan' by key informants are labelled 'Gujjars' by the villagers (see the following sections).

[13] Official statistics say that in Pakistan's rural areas 34% of women and 64% of men (10 years and above) were literate in 2007-08 (Government of Pakistan [GoP]; 2008: 44). Literacy for this survey was defined as the ability to read a newspaper and to write a simple letter.

[14] There are constitutionally recognised federally and provincially administered tribal areas, so-called FATAs and PATAs. While the National and Provincial Assemblies can exert certain powers in these tribal areas, they cannot implement laws directly (for background on this issue, see www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/, Part XII, Chapter 3, accessed 10 February 2011).

Paper III

Grünenfelder, Julia (2011): **'A female ... will not be available here': Gendered labour markets in Northwest Pakistan's rural development sector**. *Journal of Workplace Rights* 15 (2):229-251.

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A FEMALE . . . WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE HERE": GENDERED LABOUR MARKETS IN NORTHWEST PAKISTAN'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

While Pakistan has legally binding mechanisms to promote gender equality in employment, labour markets are shaped by the highly gender-segregated society they are embedded in. Based on the conceptualisation of labour markets as gendered institutions, I explore how gender generates unequal access to the labour market for social organisers—a term referring to a type of development practitioner—in the Hazara region, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan, making it difficult for women to participate in an occupational field where they are urgently needed to work with village women. Drawing on a comparison of job announcements and employees' profiles, I argue that social norms generate gendered inequalities of access to jobs as social organisers by regulating access to information, ability to travel, and eligibility for employment. In this article, I contribute to a better understanding of the gendered nature of this specific labour market, the impediments to gender equality in employment, and the need for an improvement in the work contexts of the female labour force in rural Pakistan in order to make it possible for women to do the job.

INTRODUCTION: LABOUR MARKETS AS GENDERED INSTITUTIONS

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including those labour rights stating that everyone has the right to just and favourable conditions of work (United Nations, 1947). Pakistan adopted the

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http://baywood.com

declaration in the same year, and also signed the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which urges signatories, for example, to ensure equality at work, stating that "all individuals should be accorded equal opportunities to develop fully the knowledge, skills and competencies that are relevant to the economic activities they wish to pursue" (ILO, 1998). Pakistan included several labour rights in its Constitution, providing a legal framework for the elimination of discrimination in employment:

> The State shall: (e) make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and *women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their* age or *sex,* and for maternity benefits for women in employment. (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Article 37: Promotion of social justice and eradication of social evils; italics added)

Yet we also see that the Constitution itself, like other legislation at the national level (Ali & Knox, 2008), provides a space for normative regulation of the labour force based on sex (see italicized text in quotation from the Constitution). This approach, which is based on the assumption that there are essential differences between men and women, stands in sharp contrast to the equality approach propagated by the UN and the ILO, an approach that considers men and women as equal human beings. It is thus highly likely that women workers and employers will experience tensions when these contrasting approaches to gender meet.

Previous academic research on labour markets shows that people are not simply hired based on their skills, but that they are also hired based on social norms. Social norms have been powerful mechanisms for generating unequal access for, for example, disabled, foreign, and women workers to jobs independent of their skills (Acker, 1990; ADB & ILO, 2006; Ali & Knox, 2008; Bauder, 2001; Brah, 2001; Gottfried, 2009; ILO, 2010; Roos, 2008; Streeck, 2005; Syed, 2008). Feminist scholars such as Diane Elson (1999), Barbara Harriss-White (1998), and Carla Freeman (2001) have highlighted the fact that labour markets are gendered institutions in that they are shaped by locally embedded gender norms and stereotypes. Based on these insights, feminist studies conclude that any market structure is likely to have different implications for women than for men. Women's employment patterns, for example, are to a major degree dependent on women's position within the family, which defines what kind of jobs they take, how many hours they work, and in which places they work. Considering this, Elson conceptualises labour markets as institutions that are "bearers of gender," meaning that not only do the individual's prejudices against women's employment play a role, but so also do the social stereotypes inscribed in labour markets. Social stereotypes, for example, associate "masculinity with having authority over others in the work place (being the 'boss')" and define "what 'man's work' and 'woman's work'" is (Elson, 1999: 611). I use Elson's concept as a framework because it offers an alternative perspective on labour markets by

giving emphasis to the formal and informal gender norms and practices that are at work in labour markets.

While the relationship between women and employment in Pakistan has attracted some scientific attention, there is only a limited engagement with gender aspects of labour markets, and only a few accounts are based on qualitative approaches. In quantitative studies, researchers probe the impacts of different factors on women's participation in the employment sector: Naqvi and Shahnaz (2002), Gondal (2003), and Sultana, Nazli, and Malik (1994) draw on data from the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey. Azid, Khan, and Alamasi (2010), Faridi, Chaudhry, and Anwar (2009), Arifeen (2008), Ahmed and Hafeez (2007), and Hamid (1991) use their own empirical data collected in different districts and cities in the province of Punjab. While it turns out that income, education, age, and marital status are major determinants of female labour participation, these authors do not explain how and where gender relations play a role in the labour market and how they shape women's workplace contexts. It is thus essential to look at these issues in more detail.

This article analyses Pakistan's labour market with regard to professional rural social organisers. In using the term "social organisers," I refer to those development practitioners who are involved in "social organisation," also called "community mobilisation," but not in the management of a development organisation. Social organisation and community mobilisation in a general sense mean that these workers are responsible for creating of community organisations in villages, registering these organisations with a development project, (usually) opening a bank account for them, and visiting villagers from time to time in order to forward information from the villagers to higher project staff and vice versa.

Social organisers constitute a social category that entails a multitude of intersections in their full complexities: social organisers represent categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, age, progress, and many more. Yet, in a "reality of multiple identities" (Geiser & Steimann, 2004: 445), gender is one of the most challenging identities that female social organisers have to juggle in their everyday practice. Besides gender, class plays another crucial role in the interface between villagers and social organisers. However, the aim of this article is to look at gender aspects, and thus, the intersections of gender, class, and other identities are not analysed in detail.

Analysing the occupational field of social organisation is interesting insofar as women-only positions demand women employees specifically and positions for social organisers are usually announced as entry-level positions. They offer young adults the possibility of accessing the labour market and having their first experiences in employment. Unless people, above all women, have motivating first experiences, they will be unlikely to remain in the labour market. Social organisers' jobs, however, imply that employees are willing and able to align gender order to job-specific activities, which is regarded as highly demanding

(Ahmad, 2002, 2007; Goetz, 1997; Jackson, 1997). Further, female social organisers are important in working together with village women who are unwilling to discuss their problems with male social organisers. Observing the challenges and opportunities encountered in this occupational field allows us to draw conclusions about the gendered nature of the labour market and to formulate recommendations that support women in remaining active in the workforce. However, I do not discuss how gendered inequalities in access to the job are created because of men's and women's unequal pre-market capital endowment, in terms, for example, of academic degrees and social networks.

The rest of the article is organised as follows. First, I outline the context of gender and employment in Pakistan in general. Second, I explain how social organisation became an occupational field in rural Northwest Pakistan and briefly outline the geographical location in which the study takes place. Third comes an overview of my methodological approaches. Fourth, I delineate the formal requirements for social organisers and the characteristics of the occupational field by examining job announcements. Fifth, based on this examination, I outline aspects of social organisers' profiles in rural Northwest Pakistan. Sixth, I discuss the role of gender by pointing out aspects that hinder or enable people, especially women, in fulfilling job requirements. In the last section, I highlight the key messages of the article and draw a conclusion, including some recommendations.

GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT IN PAKISTAN

Gender plays a crucial role in Pakistan's labour markets, which is not surprising, since labour markets reflect certain characteristics of the larger society. Studies of women and work in Muslim contexts (Khan, 2007; Mirza, 2002; Papanek, 1971; Syed, 2010) stress the importance of purdah: the institution of purdah is a way of dealing with gender order at a societal level by separating the sexes. It is related to Islamic values and designates a broad set of behaviour patterns rather than a fixed set of rules (Mirza, 2002). While in Pakistan purdah has always played a crucial role in the organisation of everyday life (Akram-Lodhi, 1996; Besio, 2006; Fafchamps & Quisumbing, 1999; Siegmann & Sadaf, 2006; Sultana et al., 1994), gender norms have had supportive as well as restrictive consequences for women's participation in the labour market (Cook, 2001; Haeri, 2002; Mirza, 1999, 2002; Papanek, 1971; Weiss, 1984). When, for example, in the years after 1977 under military ruler Zia ul Haq, the concept of gender segregation was strengthened and formalised in several laws, female employees were needed in specific occupations such as medicine or education—even in rural areas—in order to maintain this strict gender segregation. Additionally, new areas for women's employment, such as factory work and office work, have emerged during the last decades. Yet purdah has also made it impossible or difficult for many Pakistani women to take up formal

employment (Government of Pakistan, 2009a; Zia, 1998), for example, because women are expected not to interact with men in offices, shops, and buses. In a recent newspaper article and a related documentary for the *New York Times*, Adam B. Ellick (2010a, 2010b) portrays young lower-middle- class women and the challenges they face if they want to take up formal employment in the service sector in urban Pakistan.

Even though in Pakistan the proportion of women in the labour force has increased during the last decades, the labour force participation rate of Pakistani women was still only 21.8% compared with 82.4% of men in the year 2008 (Government of Pakistan, 2009a). The report is based on data from the Pakistan Labour Force Survey (Government of Pakistan, 2009b). The gender gap in labour force participation (for people aged 15+) is larger in urban than in rural Pakistan since limited job opportunities are available for women outside the agricultural sector (Government of Pakistan, 2009a): 28.3% of the female and 84.5% of the male population are currently economically active in rural areas compared with 9.7% and 78.7% in urban areas. In the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, the gender gap in labour force participation is comparable with the national average for people aged 10 years and above (Government of Pakistan, 2009b).

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AS AN OCCUPATIONAL FIELD IN RURAL PAKISTAN

Social organisation (also called community organisation or social mobilisation) as a formal occupation emerged in Pakistan in the 1980s. The rationale behind this new form of activism was at least twofold. First, parts of society were eager to bring change to Pakistan. As in the community organising approach developed by Saul Alinsky for urban neighbourhoods in the United States (and practiced among many others by Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama [Obama, 1990]), one rationale was to empower marginalised individuals (e.g., women) and rural communities by organising them as groups of citizens that are able to change the discriminating structures affecting their everyday life (Gittell & Vidal, 1999). Second, previous state-led rural development in Pakistan had focused merely on technical interventions so far and was not likely to succeed in the future without social change on the ground, that is, in villages or communities. In Pakistan, Shoaib Sultan Khan and Akhter Hameed Khan, leaders of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme and the Orangi Pilot Project, were two of the earliest and most important promoters and pioneers of social organisation and helped to transform Pakistan's approach to rural development fundamentally (Jan & Jan, 2000; Rasmussen et al., 2007). An increasing number of social organisers have been hired as mediators between projects and local society. International donors' development agendas have further consolidated the occupational field of social organisation. With their discourses of participatory, community-driven,

and sustainable development, international donors have pressurised people who formulated development policies and projects to include social aspects and focus on local people in their proposals (Oakley, 1991; Rauch, 2009). The two rationales are still relevant in Pakistan's occupational field of social organisation today.

In order to discuss the labour market for rural social organisers as a gendered institution, I draw on examples from the Hazara region. The Hazara region is located in the eastern part of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK), formerly known as the North West Frontier Province. Until 2000, Hazara Division was the name of an administrative unit; now, Hazara is no longer used in official language but is retained in colloquial language. Hazara refers to the districts of Abbottabad, Battagram, Haripur, Kohistan, and Mansehra. The region is characterised by mountainous terrain and small landholdings of less than a hectare, and it is famous for its mix of Hindko-, Pashto-, Gujjari-, and Kohistani-speaking inhabitants and the diverse ethnic backgrounds of its residents. A major source of income for the people of Hazara is agriculture. Other income sources are remittances, some small-scale industries, and government jobs. Due to a devastating earthquake that occurred in Azad Kashmir and Hazara in 2005, the number of development organisations in the area increased significantly, and employment in the development sector, for example, as social organisers, now offers a further important source of income.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Many studies of female labour force participation have given preference to supply-side factors (e.g., the influence of schooling on employment careers) while neglecting demand-side factors (e.g., workplace and job characteristics). Buchmann, Kriesi, and Sacchi (2004), for example, argue that the dominance of individual-centred theorising and the difficulties of measuring contextual factors have led to a relative neglect of analyses of demand-side-related opportunities and constraints. They identify this neglect as a "serious shortcoming" (Buchmann et al., 2004: 166). The present article takes up this perspective and starts with an analysis of job announcements in order to present demand-side factors. However, since the aim of this study is to uncover *how* gender generates unequal access to the labour market and not to measure certain factors quantitatively, I draw on several qualitative methods to approach the labour market (see below). As well as providing a qualitative analysis of job announcements, I analyse the profiles of employed social organisers. The combination of the two analyses will allow me to discuss how the labour market shapes workers' profiles and how it works as a gendered institution.

For the analysis of job announcements, I selected announcements that were published online on BrightSpyre, Pak NGOs Home, the NGO World, and other

Web sites through regular searches or chance encounters between May 2009 and April 2010. BrightSpyre is an online job portal offering job postings and information on human resources. It was one of the first online job portals in Pakistan when it was introduced in 2002, and has remained—in addition to newspapers and personal communications—one of the most important sources of information for people seeking jobs in the development sector (informal discussions with social organisers, summer 2008). Employers that announce jobs on BrightSpyre include, for example, USAID, OXFAM, Save the Children, ICRC, World Vision, various UN organisations such as UNDP and FAO and many others, and also Pakistani nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). Pak NGOs Home is a Google group for individuals working in the development field. A majority of the contributions by its group members deal with vacancy announcements. The NGO World is a homepage dedicated to the NGO sector in Pakistan, providing resources such as articles, calls for proposals, or job announcements for nongovernmental as well as governmental organisations. I collected and analysed 22 advertisements for a total number of 101 positions as social organisers (12 announcements for women only, 9 for men only, and 80 that were gender neutral); 24 of them were in Hazara and 77 were in other regions of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province. The job announcements were analysed based on a qualitative content analysis approach (Mayring, 2010). A coding framework was elaborated inductively with the aim of getting an overview of how the job of a social organiser is described, what skills and qualifications are required, and what the employer can offer to the employee. Examples of the codes are "skills," "salary level," and "educational background."

The profiles of employed social organisers were elaborated based on the coding framework derived from the job announcements. Two additional codes—"family situation" and "plans for the future"—were elaborated inductively from the interviews. Information on the profiles was gathered using a range of qualitative methods such as formal semistructured interviews, informal group discussions, informal talks, and participant observation (Flick, 2005; O'Reilly, 2005) with 15 social organisers during eight months of field research. Interactions took place in English and sometimes in a mixture of English and Urdu. The field research was carried out in the rural Hazara region, Pakistan, in 2007 and 2008. I look at people who already work as social organisers and contrast male and female workers; in this way, I uncover gender-specific aspects that are at work in the labour market. While the small number of informants may not provide a sample representative of a larger group of social organisers, and the convenient sampling (Patton, 1990) may not cover the full range of possible subjectivities, the analysis of these profiles allows me to explore different aspects of social organisers and issues of whose paradoxical nature I was not aware in advance.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR SOCIAL ORGANISERS

"Social organisers" are hired and employed under diverse designations, such as "community organisers," "social mobilisers," and "village workers." I use the expression "social organiser" as a generic term since it is a designation that is used routinely among people working in the development sector and associated fields. There, the term "social organisers" is usually used to refer to men, while "female" is added as a prefix for women (as can be seen in one of the quotations below). In this article however, I will use the terms "male social organisers" and "female social organisers" where I refer to a specific group, and "social organisers" where I refer to male and female social organisers. While job profiles have changed over the years, and specific projects offer activities that require specific skills, certain core skills have persisted. Job announcements offer valuable insights into these core skills and, in consequence, offer the possibility of characterising the occupational field and exploring the requirements specific to the profession.

Required Skills and Qualifications

According to the job announcements, there is a specific set of key competencies that are required from potential employees. In the job descriptions, employers do not ask for traditional specialist knowhow (e.g., medical or agricultural knowledge) but rather for a range of different transferable skills. Since these skills are essential for doing out-of-town fieldwork, some of them (such as interpersonal skills or knowledge of culture) can also be considered specialist knowledge in the field of social organisation. Table 1 shows what could be called the key competencies or essential skills that social organisers are required to have.

Further, there are always specifications about required educational qualifications and working experience. It is essential for applicants to be holders of an academic degree. In general, employees are required to have a master's degree in social sciences, but sometimes a bachelor's degree is sufficient. Usually, the jobs are announced as entry-level positions (i.e., requiring less than two years of experience) or as mid-career level positions (requiring two or more years of experience). Sometimes, the employer explicitly states that the previous working experience must be relevant to the job a person is applying for. Some organisations have rules about whether "local residents," that is, people who come from or live in the area where they are supposed to work, are eligible to apply for a job or not. As stated above, there are some announcements containing indications about which gender is eligible to apply.

What the Employer Offers

Potential employees as well as practicing social organisers do not evaluate a job based only on the employee's responsibilities but also on the package offered

Table 1. Skills Required from Social Organisers (classification by the author)

Methodological skills	• *Knowledge of local languages* (usually specified, e.g., Hindko and Pashto in the case of Hazara; sometimes English is also required) • *Writing skills* (only sometimes metioned, language not mentioned) • *Computer skills* (usually not specified, sometimes related to basic user knowledge of MS Office) • *Data collection skills* (usually not specifiefd, sometimes related to the collection of villagers' socioeconomic data through a questionnaire)
Social skills	• C*ommunication and interpersonal skills* (only sometimes mentioned in job advertisements, not specified) • *Knowledge of the culture*; knowledge of the area; cultural sensitivity (not specified)
Coping and self-management skills	• *Ability to travel* on a regular basis; *willingness to travel* in the field/willingness to go outside of the duty station (for training/capacity building)

(including type of contract, salary, allowances, insurance, pensions, etc.) and the context of the job (including duty station, reputation of the employer, career perspectives, security/safety issues, and available infrastructure such as hostels and means of transportation, etc.). Table 2 gives an overview of the information that is given in the job announcements that were analysed.

The review shows that there is not much information in job announcements about what the employer can offer to potential employees. The type of employment, duration of contract, and location of the office is mentioned in most cases, whereas the salary level is usually not mentioned. Social organisers do salaried work in the formal labour market, but their contracts and thus their legal protection vary considerably. In the case of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, most social organisers are employed in the context of a project, that is, on a contractual basis. Contracts are usually issued for a period of one year or less, which results in temporal insecurity for the employees, and the conditions of these short-term contracts again are diverse in relation to, for example, maternity leave, sick pay, or cancellation periods. Often, protection measures are incomplete, which

Table 2. What the Employer Can Offer to Social Organisers (classification by the Author)

Type of employment	• Usually *contractual*, seldom regular
Duration of contract	• *One year* (sometimes with possibility of extension), or *short-term* employment of less than one year
Duty station	• *Location of office* is always indicated, usually also the district(s) where fieldwork will take place
Salary	• Indications of amount are rare but range either between 10,000 and 15,000 PKR/month or between 20,000 and 25,000 PKR/month

leads to welfare insecurity for employees. Since social organisers are employed for specific projects and are not regular staff members, their career prospects are also minimal.

The payment for positions in Pakistani NGOs (which constitute the majority of positions) is low compared with the payment for persons working in freelance consultancies as development practitioners or the payment in office jobs for people with similar educational backgrounds and work experience in inter- or multi-national NGOs. Salaries for social organisers range between 10,000 and 25,000 PKR/month: 15,000 PKR/month (approx. US$170/month, 135 EUR/month) seems to be the normal salary for one-year contracts with Pakistani NGOs, while 25,000 PKR/month (approx. US$285/month, 225 EUR/month) is paid for short-term employment and by international development agencies. This is not regarded as very attractive compensation for the tasks social organisers have to undertake. Above all, fieldwork is regarded as strenuous, and people often expect additional per diem allowances for field days. Yet not all employers are able or willing to pay extra.

I assume that in general, transportation and accommodation facilities are not part of the package for social organisers, since they are not mentioned in the job announcements. In July 2009, the Pakistani NGO Khwendo Kor, for example, announced on its homepage four jobs: one position as female senior programme manager, one as female project facilitator, and one each as female and male social organiser. The first two positions were advertised with the following offer:

> Khwendo Kor has gender friendly policies, and we also offer pick & drop facilities within 25 kilometres and EOBI [Employee's Old-Age Benefits Institution] for regular employees.

The positions for social organisers—employees who are not classified as among regular employees and are not located in the head office in the provincial capital, Peshawar—were not advertised with this offer. I thus conclude that the two social organisers were able to benefit neither from pick and drop facilities nor from EOBI.

PROFILES OF EMPLOYED SOCIAL ORGANISERS

A comparison of job announcements and male and female social organisers' profiles provides evidence of gender aspects in the labour market that was examined. The data presented in this section are based on interviews and discussions with 15 Muslim social organisers and complemented with insights from discussions with other development practitioners.

Family Situation, Age, and Family Background

It is striking that among the social organisers who were interviewed, only men have children, while I have not encountered a single female social organiser who has children. Women with children are missing from these employees, and in discussions, I found out that it is unusual for female social organisers to be married. In Pakistan, family status is strongly linked with age, and people are usually married between the ages of 22 and 28. The mean age of marriage for women in Pakistan is 23.1 years (UN-DESA, 2008). My female interview participants roughly reflect these statistics, since most female social organisers on the job are not yet married and are in their early 20s. In comparison, male social organisers in general are slightly older.

Comparing different women, it turns out that family composition and position in the sequence of children is much more relevant to women than it is to men. Women with married elder sisters and sisters-in-law tend to experience more freedom regarding their studies and work, because their elder sisters have already shown respect for the dominant social norms, and their sisters-in-law can support the mother in the household. One of the female social organisers experienced major support from her parents because she is an only child and her father is not able to work. Thus, the parents depend on her salary for their living.

Place of Origin and Current Living Situation

Social organisers' places of origins are very diverse, mainly among women, who often come from other, less rural and less conservative areas than the areas where they work. Yet many social organisers say about themselves that they know village life, can interact with villagers, and have personal links to rural areas, and they refer to the "cultural knowledge" that enables them to do their job. Nonlocal women staff face additional challenges. If they cannot commute, they are dependent on either a hostel provided by the employer or a person who

takes them as paying guests. Some women's hostels have been closed due to security problems and threats against working women, which reduces women's options with regard to possible living situations. In any case, it is socially not well accepted in the research area that a single woman should live without any member of her family.

Place of origin, together with family background, is also relevant to the language skills of social organisers. Those coming from distant places may be proficient in local languages due to their family background or migration history, whereas local social organisers may not be able to speak all the languages spoken in the working area (e.g., not all Hindko-speaking social organisers have a command of the Pashto language). I have encountered social organisers who were not able to communicate with all the villagers because of language problems. This occurs not only when social organisers lack local language skills but also when people with nonlocal linguistic backgrounds migrate to the working area of the social organiser. The language problem seems to be more problematic for women because male social organisers can usually communicate in Urdu with male villagers who learned Urdu at school or during their time as labour migrants in the big cities of Pakistan or the Gulf states. Labour migration from KPK to the Gulf states and big Pakistani cities is very popular (Gazdar, 2003; Jan, 2008). Many all households have at least one male member at present involved in migration, and usually they have one male member of the older generation who has returned home permanently from migration.

Economic (and Class) Background

Ahmad (2007: 349) argues that NGO fieldworkers in Bangladesh are "from rural, middle-class families and, because the work requires rigorous physical exercise, most of them are young. They do not join NGOs as field-workers enthusiastically, but rather to have a job and earn money." My observation corresponds with Ahmad's insofar as women and men work as social organisers because they need to financially support their families or are the major bread-winners in the family. While I would categorise social organisers in Northwest Pakistan as middle class or even lower middle class too, I am aware of the intense debates around concepts and definitions of the middle class(es) in Pakistan (Butt, 2008; Husain, 2010; Javed, 2010a, 2010b; Tariq, 2010).

While some define the Pakistani middle class solely on the basis of monthly household incomes, others use political resources or status symbols (such as specific car types) as proxies, most of which refer to urban contexts. Drawing on debates about the Pakistani middle class, I conclude that people of the lower classes usually do not have the level of formal education that is necessary to enter the labour market for social organisers. Azid et al. (2010) found that poverty pushes married women into labour force participation in Punjab Province, and since married women seem to stop working as social organisers,

I hypothesise that female social organisers probably do not belong to at least the poorest segment of society. On the other hand, people from the upper classes prefer to work in jobs involving less physical strain and a higher status, if they work at all.

Educational Background and Job Training

People start working as social organisers after having completed their master's degree (men and women) or their bachelor's degree (women), usually in the social sciences or humanities. The fact that only women are employed with a bachelor's degree reflects the gap that exists between the supply of female workers and the demand for them. In some areas it is not possible for employers to find enough women with a master's degree who are willing to do the job.

Social organisers have degrees in subjects such as sociology, gender and development, political science, and English language and literature. They have theoretical knowledge in a range of topics covered in their studies, but they have not gone through practical training before they are employed. It is the employers of social organisers who are responsible for practical training and coaching. Big NGOs offer training courses for social organisers, but those are not generally held on a regular basis and hardly match new staff members' entry into an organisation. Some social organisers thus work without having received any specific training in social organisation: "My qualification does not match with my job, but I have learned a lot" (Kasim,[1] male social organiser).

An academic degree reveals a person as literate and educated and thus generally capable of doing social organisation. While the subject-specific specialist knowledge acquired during studies (e.g., in English literature) is not always useful on the job, academic education is supposed to develop certain skills that are relevant to work as a social organiser; for example, people learn to work independently, or to move and speak out in gender-mixed environments; or they develop tangible transferable skills such as basic user knowledge of MS Office or writing skills. Unfortunately, Ullah (2005: 35) reports that "students in publicly funded institutions get an education of mediocre quality which does not prepare them to participate effectively in the economic, political and social life of the country." It is questionable whether universities are able to develop all the methodological skills requested by employers of social organisers. In any case, there is a remarkable density of higher educational organisations in the Hazara area, partly based on Abbottabad's historic and current role as army headquarters, which provides a good basis for the development of an educated labour force.

[1] All names are pseudonyms. Quotations are based on transcribed voice records and detailed interview protocols.

Plans for the Future

Bad career prospects within the field of social organisation, dissatisfaction with the job, and low job security are all reasons why it is common among social organisers to look for other job offers on a regular basis. There is an evident difference between men's and women's rhetoric in regard to the plans for the future. When men talk about their professional future, they talk about applying for a better-paid job at an inter- or multinational organisation, about continuing their studies in Pakistan, and about going abroad to study or work. One man also formulates his dream of setting up his own NGO in the development sector in order to pursue his own welfare strategy. Women rather talk about searching for (or making use of) better-paid alternatives within the development sector and about getting a job outside the development sector that promises increased social security. Even though salaries for civil servants are not very high, many young people consider governmental packages (which include social security provisions such as permanent work contracts, pensions, and old age benefits) attractive. In many small towns and rural areas, government positions offer the only possibility of formal paid employment, especially for women.

One female social organiser with a bachelor's degree plans to go on with her studies parallel to her work as a social organiser. She has applied for admission to a distance learning master's course, but has not been accepted so far. Unlike men, some women consider marriage as a desirable plan for the future and/or as a way to quit unfavourable working conditions in the field of social organisation.

Since it is not at all my aim to homogenise the members of one gender, I would like to refer to Mirza (2002), who distinguishes four types of female office worker and, by doing this, offers a more nuanced picture of female middle-class workers: "family supporter without severe economic need," "major breadwinner with severe economic need," "women searching for new perspectives," and "restarter type." Additionally, Mirza discusses the fact that some women office workers orient their education and skills training toward "symbolic education" (i.e., the collection of degrees in the formal educational system that have relevance for the marriage market), while others prefer "market-oriented education" (i.e., learning skills that can be used in the labour market to support the family). These orientations intersect with gender identities and influence people's plans for the future.

THE ROLE OF GENDER IN THE LABOUR MARKET FOR SOCIAL ORGANISERS

Based on the analysis of job announcements and social organisers' profiles, I argue that social values and norms regarding gender play a role in at least three main areas: access to information, ability to travel, and eligibility for employment. In the following paragraphs, I outline how gender works in these areas.

Access to information about open positions is one of the most important preconditions for entering and remaining in a labour market. Yet access to information presents certain difficulties, some of which are gender specific. For people with limited access to the Internet, the distribution of information via online channels is an obstacle. In Pakistan, obviously everybody's Web access has worsened in recent times due to the high frequency of power cuts, yet people working and living in remote places, as a lot of social organisers do, face particular difficulties in using online job portals. Women face the additional challenge that Internet cafés are male spaces and no-go areas for women in small towns (Siegmann, 2009). It is thus even more difficult for women than for men to keep themselves updated about vacant positions. Further, men still occupy most positions in the development sector and elsewhere. Since women are socially restricted from interaction with people of the opposite sex, in general, they also have limited private and professional networks through which they can access information.

The required **ability to accept the necessity to travel**, above all to the field, poses specific challenges for women. Women's ability to travel is more restricted by social norms than the ability of men to travel, because women are, for example, still to a major extent responsible for taking care of children and other family members at home, or because women are expected to be chaperoned by a male family member on journeys. The lack of transportation and accommodation facilities may discourage women from taking up jobs as social organisers. The nonavailability of benefits such as transportation and accommodation facilities clearly has different consequences for men and for women, and it is mainly social norms that restrict women from fulfilling the requirement of being able to travel. Restrictions on women's mobility imply severe practical consequences if a female social organiser tries to avoid travelling, for example, by not going to the villages or not going to the office. In such situations, the female social organiser is not available to the village women who may want to contact her.

Social norms have gendered effects on the workforce by imposing definitions of **who is eligible to be employed** and who is not. While people with diverse geographical, linguistic, and educational backgrounds work as social organisers, women with children are not found among the employees. It is usual—not only in the area of social organisation—that women quit their jobs after getting married (Azid et al., 2010), and if not at that point, then at the latest after giving birth to a child. "Being married" functions as an accepted explanation of why women are not doing—or are not eligible to do—a job: "being married" does not primarily indicate marital status; it stands as an equivalent to professions and studies. Bringing "being married" into relation with (professional) activities gives it an exclusionary character: it appears impossible that "being married" can be combined with another occupation, for example, with paid formal-sector jobs. Social norms, insecure forms of employment, and a lack of childcare facilities are the main reasons making it unlikely for women with children to work as social organisers.

Although forms of employment in general are precarious for both men and women, the individual attitudes of employers may imply a number of specific consequences for women. Alima, a female social organiser, reports the following:

> Although my one-year contract would only expire in the end of the year, it was cancelled by September. The employer argued that I did not fulfil the requirements, meaning: I do not have a master's in education. This is contradictory to what he said during the job interview. At those times, the employer was very satisfied with me and said that experience was more important than an academic degree in education. I assume that the true reason for the dismissal is my pregnancy. I am pregnant in the 5th month, and there is no rule about pregnancy and maternity leave in my contract. I am pregnant, and they did not want to bear my medical expenses. The management thinks that I cannot manage my duties properly. And I also need at least two months maternity leave.

The example of Alima illustrates how difficult it is for women to continue in their jobs when they are pregnant or have a child, among other reasons, due to the prevailing prejudice that women are responsible for childcare, but they are not able to manage both childcare and paid work. Even if Alima's pregnancy is not the only reason for the termination of her contract, the situation has greatly discouraged her, and she may not take up another job.

Short-term employment can have either positive or negative effects on women. On the one hand, it may discourage women from doing such a job because they need to make a considerable investment in establishing accepted relationships with non-kin men (Mirza, 2002)—be they male team colleagues or government officials. On the other hand, flexibility before marriage or childbirth is appreciated, and thus, short-time employment may encourage women to enter the labour market after completing their studies, instead of staying at home.

The need for women employees in the occupational field of social organisation provides a regulatory mechanism that is essential to increasing women's chances of entering the labour market. On the one hand, women are needed to approach female villagers and group them into women's community organisations, because gender norms restrict most local women from having contact with male social organisers. On the other hand—although the recruitment of staff is left to the employer's discretion—national and international donors often pressurise employers to hire women on terms equal to those of men, based on a gender-equality approach. While an employer's negative attitudes led to discrimination against a woman worker in Alima's case, employers' positive attitudes in other cases establish women as a social group eligible to access this labour market. In this way, they contribute to more equitable opportunities for women in the occupational field of social organisation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Finding women who are able and willing to work as social organisers in Northwest Pakistan is difficult, despite the demand for women workers in the development sector. The qualifications required of jobholders are high (e.g., regarding language skills and willingness to work in a gender-mixed working environment) and the rewards (e.g., in payment and social recognition) are low. The media, the government, and NGOs point out that, despite constitutional provisions and legislative frameworks, Pakistan is far from providing just and equal employment opportunities to its citizens (Government of Pakistan, 2009a; Hisam, 2007; Zaidi, 2010). This study has shown how these difficulties are an expression of the conflicting values and norms that female Pakistani development workers are confronted with regarding their employment.

This research on social organisers in Hazara region, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, supports Naqvi and Shahnaz's (2002) and Azid et al.'s (2010) findings by showing that age, education, marital status, and parenthood status—which they identified as factors relevant to married Punjabi women's access to the labour force—regulate access for women in different ways than they do for men. Yet my analysis enables me to add two points: I discuss additional factors, and I show *how* the labour market for social organisers is subject to gendered social norms that make it difficult for women to access the labour market and remain in it. First, women are, more than men, restricted in their mobility and social interaction, which makes it more difficult for women to access information about available jobs. Second, mobility restrictions based on social norms challenge women in fulfilling the requirement of "willingness to travel." Third, social norms and values define who is eligible to be employed. Since in this definition of eligible persons, mothers and sometimes even all women are not included, these people face severe obstacles in accessing and remaining in the labour market. In conclusion, local values and norms have gendered impacts on the workforce, resulting in different challenges to the guaranteeing of equal chances to women and men.

The finding that ability and willingness to work as social organisers are gendered bears consequences that go far beyond the obstructions facing women who wish to enter and remain in the labour market. Due to the bad reputation of the occupational field and the shortage of potential female workers, competition for these jobs is weak, and it is difficult to find good candidates, or any candidates at all. Statements by several social organisers and employers suggest that turnover of female employees is high in positions that are regarded as unattractive, for example, because of the low salary or the remoteness of the workplace. Female-only posts even remain vacant from time to time, as the following quotation illustrates:

> We have [three] Social Organisation Units. . . . In [location A and B], there were two female social organisers working with us. And there is also [a] social

> organiser. They're independent unit[s]. But [the] female social organisers have resigned. They have joined other NGOs for [a] good salary. We are giving 15,000 [PKR], [while] other NGOs are giving 25,000 or 30,000 [PKR]. So naturally they will . . . [leave,] otherwise they will work with us. . . . So, [a] female social organiser will not be available here. (Male district director of a governmental development programme)

This corresponds with observations made in the governmental forestry sector by Shahbaz and Ali (2009), who states that there is a lack of female social organisers despite the availability of specific positions for women. Yet precisely in these rural areas in Pakistan, it would be highly necessary to have female social organisers working in development projects, since in this highly gender-segregated context only they, as women, have access to female villagers (Idrees et al., 2008).

In this article, I use a case study from a labour market in rural Northwest Pakistan to show how a policy of treating men and women "equally" puts working women and employers in a double-bind situation that, in many cases, is disadvantageous to women. Working women are put in a double bind because they are, on the one hand, expected to work as professional experts while, on the other hand, they are expected to act as decent women complying with certain gender norms. As we have seen above, professional expertise consists of the ability to travel to the field in order to interact with villagers, and to share and obtain information in villages, offices, and other places. Gender norms however, as we have also seen above, restrict women's mobility, their interactions with non-kin males, and their eligibility to work. Women, being confronted with different expectations, find themselves in a dilemma, being forced to choose between either disrespecting professional standards or disrespecting gender norms.

This raises a number of questions about policy implications. First, how can politically active individuals and organisations, donors, and employers work toward encouraging women's employment in the field of social organisation by changing formal workplace rights? The evidence presented in this article shows that formal regulations are most needed in two areas: contracts and accommodation. Based on an equality approach, employers must urgently integrate protective measures, such as maternity leave, into contracts to enable people, especially women, to continue work irrespective of their wish to become parents. Preventing employers from hiring female social organisers on short-term contracts without guaranteed social security will remain one of the greatest challenges. I see the main responsibility of fighting for these rights as resting with politicians, workers' organisations, and women's organisations. Further, innovative concepts for supporting women with regard to their accommodation needs are required, for example, the provision of women's hostels in small towns where several development organisations work, or lists of trustworthy families who take women as paying guests. If female staff can live close to their workplace, this can also reduce their problems with commuting. A right to adequate accommodation

could be incorporated into work contracts. However, the main challenge to the provision of adequate accommodation is the reluctance among local residents to accept working women. A feeling of insecurity, caused by several attacks on women's hostels, has led to the closure of women's hostels. Recalling the reluctance of employers to take measures with financial implications, I argue that the responsibility has to be taken by donors, including foreign donors. Donors should take seriously the complex field realities, especially for women, and supervise budget allocations accordingly, for example, forcing employers to budget money for social security schemes, adequate accommodation, and travel arrangements.

Second, to what extent can professional women support one another? To my knowledge, there are no women professionals' networks or mentoring schemes active in rural Northwest Pakistan, although I have found that many young women would appreciate the moral and material support of other professional women, especially at times when they are the only women working in a remote field office. While informal networks have been established at particular times and places, for example, between female social organisers within one organisation working in different offices, I recommend the formalisation of a professional network including women at all career stages. Such a network could provide crucial support for the exchange of information about jobs, professional training, and career options. However, the setting up of women's networks should not excuse male work colleagues and superiors from their responsibility to support women's career advancement.

Third, what can be done to advance gender equality beyond "women's empowerment"? Gender equality in Northwest Pakistan is not only about improving the situation of women but also about changing the relationship between men and women. I have observed that many development interventions on gender issues organised for villagers focus on women only and do not include men, which I consider to be a weakness. Debates on gender equality at work with both female and male potential and actual employees and employers could be one means of working toward more gender equality. Discussing gender equality in a broader framework could maybe help to challenge the prevailing norms about who is eligible to do which type of work. However, feminist movements in Pakistan have had limited outreach beyond urban centres, and it will be difficult to raise consciousness within society that "willingness to travel" and "eligibility to work" are constructed in a gendered way and to mobilise a critical mass to change gender relations.

These suggestions are clearly intended to support Ali and Knox's (2008) call for more "teeth" in implementing existing legal frameworks and removing the discriminatory practices that inhibit women's employment and economic activity. Yet they also call for more awareness of the two approaches to thinking about gender: the one that perceives women and men as essentially different, and the one that perceives them as equal human beings.

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Paper IV

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Negotiating gender relations: Muslim women and formal employment in Pakistan's rural development sector

Abstract

Drawing on evidence from qualitative field research, this paper explores how Pakistani female development practitioners experience their work situations as they are shaped both by local socio-cultural norms and globalised development agendas. In this context, policies at global and national levels demand that more female development practitioners work in remote, rural places in Pakistan, thus creating new employment opportunities for some Pakistani women. This paper argues that, within this work environment, these women are exposed to different expectations regarding their gender behaviour and that they therefore develop 'physical strategies' on the one hand, and 'discursive strategies' on the other hand, in order to negotiate gender relations in a way that allows them to engage in formal employment. This paper adds to under-researched debates on gender and work in Muslim countries as well as to debates in critical development and gender studies.

Keywords: Muslim women, Formal employment, Gender, Development, Pakistan

Introduction

While academic interest to date has mainly focused on Muslim working women in non-Muslim societies (Healy et al, forthcoming; Essers et al, 2010; Syed & Pio, 2010; Dale et al, 2002; Brah, 2001; Evans & Bowlby, 2000; Brah & Shaw, 1992), some scholars now propose to focus on working women in Muslim societies (Metcalfe and Rees, 2010; Feldmann, 2009; Sidani, 2005; Haeri, 2002). The dominant picture of the unidimensional, oppressed and passive 'Third World Muslim woman' [1] who is disproportionately burdened by unpaid work at home (Siegmann and Sadaf, 2006; Marsden, 2005; Fafchamps and Quisumbing, 2003; Akram-Lodhi, 1996) is being disrupted to make room for alternative constructions (Ahmad, 2010) such as the image of the courageous and active 'professional Muslim woman'. Unfortunately, as Haeri (2002:XII) argues, this has sometimes led to a similarly unidimensional picture based on a dichotomy between Muslim women who are either obedient or rebel against local gender norms. Several researchers have now started to unpack the 'professional Muslim woman' (Hutchings et al, 2010; Metcalfe, 2008; Ghorbani and Tung, 2007; Bahramitash, 2004). Following calls for in-depth explorations of the complexities, diversities and ambiguities in professional Muslim women's lives in specific socio-political contexts, this paper aims at making visible how Pakistani working women [2] are both subjugated and empowered by diverse relations of power.

This paper asks how Muslim women are able to work in Pakistan's rural development sector despite gender norms that are, in many cases, disadvantageous to their engagement in formal labour markets. In order to address such questions, other researchers have drawn on participant observation and various types of interviews to describe 'physical strategies', such as gender segregation in offices that are developed by working women in Pakistan (Mirza, 2002, 1999; Goetz, 1997; Weiss, 1984; Papanek, 1971). However, conceptualising language as constitutive of realities (Whetherell et al, 2001, Scott, 1991) and acknowledging that constrictive gender-normative rules have often become unquestioned norms (see e.g. Shaheed, 2010 for

Pakistan), it is additionally necessary to explore the ways in which representations, e.g. of gender, come to be mobilised in women's narratives. Participant observation and interviews are now widely used for the analysis of discursive strategies, e.g. with the aim to explore negotiations of social relations such as ethnicity, family and gender (Katila, 2010; Essers et al, 2010; Nentwich, 2006). As an analytic approach, this paper uses qualitative content analysis to trace women's 'physical strategies', and discourse analytical tools to explore women's 'discursive strategies'. The analysis of professional Muslim women's ways to negotiate gender at physical and discursive levels will generate new empirical insights regarding Muslim women's experiences with formal employment.

Focussing on rural northwest Pakistan and on female Social Organisers as a type of development practitioner, this paper provides an example from a formal employment sector that offers a working opportunity for a growing number of well-educated women expected to increasingly enter the labour market, especially the service sector, in future (UNRISD, 2010; Ellick, 2010; Ghani and Ahmed, 2009; World Bank, 2009). 'Social Organisers' are development practitioners who often work in remote rural areas and who are involved in community organisation and mobilisation, but not in the management of a development organisation. The paper argues that within the work environment of Social Organisers, competing discourses on gender relations complicate working women's everyday life, but may also provide them an opportunity to reconcile specific gender norms with their labour market engagements. The presented findings illustrate how women achieve such reconciliations through the use of different physical and discursive strategies.

This paper begins with a review of the literature on women and work in Pakistan. This is followed by the methodological approach that underlies this paper. The next part presents how Social Organisation emerged as a new occupational field for Pakistani women. The paper then outlines the challenges women face while working in that occupational field. Afterwards, the paper shows how female Social Organisers in the rural Hazara region of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province negotiate gender relations through 'physical strategies'. Finally, the paper illustrates how these women workers negotiate gender relations through 'discursive strategies'. The conclusion emphasises that, in Pakistan, the coexistence of competing discourses forces women employees to negotiate gender relations so that they can reconcile the requirements of being both a good Muslim and a good worker.

Women and work in Pakistan

In Pakistan, even though formal structural constraints on women's employment have been reduced substantially (GoP, 2009a; Ali and Knox, 2008; CEDAW, 2007), only a small percentage of women engage in formal employment. While the proportion of women in the labour force has increased during the last decades, the labour force participation rate of women was still only 22% compared with 82% of men in the year 2008 (GoP, 2009a:10). The gender gap in labour force participation (for people aged 15+) is larger in urban than in rural Pakistan since limited job opportunities are available for women outside the agricultural sector (GoP, 2009a:13-14): 28% of the female and 85% of the male population are currently economically active in rural areas compared with 10% and 79% in urban areas. In the Khyber-Pakhtunkwa Province, the gender gap in labour force participation is comparable with that of the national average for people aged 10 years and above (GoP, 2009b:18).

Gender is one of the most powerful social relations that shape Pakistani people's everyday lives, reflecting social and political constructions of differences between women and men [3] (Shaheed, 2010; Raza and Murad, 2010; Gazdar, 2008). Like in other Muslim countries, gender relations are strongly sexualised and regulated through the institution of *Purdah* [4] (Syed, 2008; Besio, 2006; Mirza, 2002; Pastner, 1974; Papanek, 1973). Based on *Purdah*, separate worlds for women and men are created (Pastner, 1974; Papanek, 1973), which is often referred to as gender segregation and female seclusion. Respecting and crossing boundaries of these separate worlds constitutes a major challenge for Pakistani men and women, in particular because Islamic law does not provide unambiguous concepts for social interaction between men and women outside kinship relations (Syed, 2010; Mirza, 2002: 19-27). Since there are no clear rules on how to interact with people from the opposite sex outside kinship, the evaluation of whether a certain conduct conforms to *Purdah* or not – i.e. whether a behaviour is 'modest' (Syed, 2010) or not – remains a matter of personal or collective interpretation, definition and negotiation (Syed, 2010; Marsden, 2008; Syed and Ali, 2006). However, since in many Pakistani families, women embody their family's honour (Pastner, 1974; Papanek, 1973), they are – more than men – subject to seclusion in space and time and, as a consequence, also to various degrees of restrictions in activity (Hausmann et al, 2010; Shaheed, 2009, 2002; CEDAW, 2007; Besio, 2006; Weiss, 1998; Gratz, 1998).

Despite the existing gender segregation in many spheres of life in Pakistan, female employment has never been condemned in principle (Syed, 2010; Papanek, 1971). At least some women have been able and willing to take up employment outside the home despite gender norms that rather hinder them to do so (Khan, 2007; Zia, 1998; Weiss, 1994:420-431). Traditionally, women have been socially allowed to take up employment in 'modern', i.e. non-agricultural occupations, wherever the gender-segregated societal structure demanded women professionals (Gazdar, 2008; Mirza, 2002; Weiss, 1984; Papanek, 1971). Examples of such modern occupations include female teachers who have to teach girls, and female doctors that are needed to provide medical care for women (Papanek, 1973:311). Women and employers have developed strategies to adapt *Purdah* to new work contexts such as factories and offices (Weiss, 1984; Papanek, 1971; Mirza, 2002, 1999). Still, developing strategies for maintaining gender segregation does not guarantee that professional women are socially respected by their families and their work colleagues. In Pakistan, women working in a gender-mixed environment have to deal with physical abuse through which *Purdah* restrictions are transgressed and violated to the disadvantage of women (SDPC, 2009:75-122; Mirza, 2002:44-51 and Kamal, 1998), as well as with accusations and obloquy related to the possibility of such physical abuse, calling into question women's honour (Syed, 2008). Therefore, many women are reluctant to take on a job, even if they are formally allowed to do so by their male family members (Zia, 1998).

Quantitative studies show that income, education, age and marital status are major determinants of female labour participation (Azid et al, 2010; Faridi et al, 2009; Arifeen, 2008a, 2008b; Ahmed and Hafeez, 2007; Naqvi and Shahnaz, 2002; Gondal, 2003; Sultana et al, 1994; Hamid, 1991). In these studies however, it remains unclear how women who actually work experience their employment and how they are able to reconcile conflicting expectations. There is hardly any literature regarding Muslim women's strategies to deal with gender-related expectations in gender-mixed

employment contexts. Mirza (1999, 2002) has shown that urban female office workers in the city of Lahore use a number of strategies to reconcile their employment with local gender norms. For example they develop "socially obligatory relationships", which is a strategy of establishing informal contacts and links with the family of the male work colleagues, mainly with the female family members, in order to create social control of the men's behaviour (Mirza, 1999). They also integrate male colleagues into a "fictive kinship system", which refers to women's use of kinship terms (such as brother or uncle) for male work colleagues in order to make men more responsible for protecting the women (Mirza, 1999). Looking at Muslim women from a socio-psychological perspective, Syed (2010, 2008) and Syed & Ali (2006) have argued that women who work in a formal organisation need to be able to regulate their emotions in order to meet conflicting demands of their social and organizational contexts. This paper pursues these authors' argument that it is essential for Muslim professional women to develop strategies in order to be able to participate in formal labour markets.

Methodology

This paper reports on selected insights from a larger research project carried out in the Hazara region of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly known as North-West Frontier Province), Pakistan. The aim of the research project was to understand the impact of development discourses on local people's livelihoods in rural northwest Pakistan. The development sector is one area in which Pakistani women are hired in formal work contexts outside their homes. Women development practitioners' engagement with gender norms turned out to be a crucial theme and is thus explored in this paper.

Hazara region as case study location

The Hazara region, including the Districts of Abbottabad, Battagram, Haripur, Kohistan and Mansehra, is located in the Eastern part of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province and is characterised by large agriculturally influenced rural areas. The province in general is said to be stricter with the interpretation of gender segregation than other areas in Pakistan (Zia, 2009; Weiss, 1994:423), but such statements mainly relate to the Pukthoon communities and their code of behaviour (*Pakhtonwali*). The Hazara region in particular is said to be less conservative regarding gender norms than other parts of the province (but is still stricter compared with many other parts of the country) based on the argumentation that in multi-ethnic Hazara, diverse ways of interpreting *Purdah* co-exist. Nevertheless, attitudes towards women who have a formal job as well as to development and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are very controversial in the region. The region has, on the one hand, benefitted from development interventions during the past decades. On the other hand, experiences with corruption and with Westerners' 'different' lifestyles in the aftermath of the 2005-earthquake left ambiguous feelings towards relief and development interventions. Like in other parts of Pakistan (Jafar, 2007), militant and extremist organisations have negatively influenced people's opinions and behaviour towards NGOs. Nevertheless, the region has been a focal point for national and international donors' development interventions, and many new jobs in the development sector have been created in the region, e.g. for Social Organisers.

Methods and data

Material for this paper was selected out of a set of data that I collected during eight months of field research in 2007 and 2008. During that time, I engaged in participant observation and conducted various types of interviews and group discussions (Crang and Cook, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005) with villagers, government employees and staff of non-governmental agencies, including male and female Social Organisers. In order to address the question posed in this paper, I mainly draw on data that I co-produced with those Muslim women that were employed as Social Organisers at the time of the interactions (5 women) or were previously employed (2 women). The conversations with the female Social Organisers were either held in English or in an English-Urdu-mixture, moderated and interpreted with the help of a female Pakistani research assistant. Conversations were recorded whenever possible and translated and transcribed afterwards. Non-recorded conversations, observations and own experiences were entered into a research diary. Table 1 gives an overview of the participants this paper draws on and the facets of their subjectivities that emerged as a key focus during our interactions.

Table 1: Profiles of participants

Official function	**Facets of subjectivity**
Female Social Organisers (FSO)	
FSO	Around 25 yrs old; unmarried; has two younger brothers and five elder sisters ("four are married, one is teaching"); lives in the District centre at her family's home, the family has a second house in a village close to the town; Hindko-speaking; approx 4 hrs travel to/from office by public transport (in 2007), 40min to/from office by public transport (in 2008); MA in English literature; She is the first person from the village who has studied; approx. 3 years working experience in the development sector, 8-9 month as Social Organiser (2007); she entered the development sector in the aftermath of the earthquake in 2005
FSO	Around 20 yrs old; unmarried; single child who has to support her parents financially; comes from a village in the District where she works; Approx. 6hrs/day for home-office-home (or less if she stays with relatives) by public transport; Hindko-speaking; Bachelor degree
Education coordinator and former FSO	Around 25-30 years old, married, pregnant; lives in neighbouring District together with her husband and a cousin of her husband; approx. 80min to/from office, is picked and dropped by husband; Hindko-speaking; MA in Urdu; entered the development sector because a male relative was working in the development sector; 6 years working experience in the development sector; worked as Social Organiser for 3 years
FSO	Around 25 years old; unmarried; comes from Punjab Province originally; lives in District capital as a paying guest; approx. 10min to/from office by foot; Punjabi-speaking; came to Hazara region because she did not find a job in Islamabad; MBA
Research assistant and former FSO	Around 30 years old; married, no child; originally from another District in KPP; lives in a big city in the Punjab Province; Hindko-/Pashto-speaking; MBA and MSc in Sociology
FSO	Around 20years old; unmarried; Hindko-speaking
FSO	Around 20-25 years old; unmarried; Hindko-speaking
Other characters that appear in the paper	
Female PhD researcher and author of this paper	Around 30 years old, MSc in Geography; white; European; English as foreign language; unmarried; no child; travelling usually by public transport, alone or with research assistant; staying at a guest house or in a rented flat in a District capital; non-practising Christian

Female manager of a governmental development project	Around 35-40 years old; lives and works in District capital; Officer status; Master in English literature; work experience as collage teacher, Human Resource Officer and different management jobs in the development sector; fluent in English, Urdu and Pashto; entered the development sector in the aftermath of the earthquake 2005
Male Social Organiser	Married, 3 sons; lives in a neighbouring village; 60min to/from office by motorbike; completed his master in Gender and Development (major), environmental sociology (minor) and demographic studies (minor) in early 2007; while he was credit officer in 2007, he was employed as Social Organiser within the same organisation in 2008
Office boy	Lives in a small rural town or in a neighbouring village to that town
Male Mayor	Candidate for Member of Provincial Parliament (in 2008)

In order to be able to understand how women experience their work as Social Organisers and to explore their strategies, I used two approaches. For the analysis of 'physical strategies', I employed techniques such as inductive coding from content analysis (Mayring, 2010). I traced the gender-related challenges female Social Organisers faced and analysed how women deal with those challenges. For the analysis of 'discursive strategies', I used the analytical tool of *language games* developed within discourse theory (Mottier, 2005). *Language games* (i.e. statements or constructions of meaning) are one aspect of discursive practices that are used to produce, reproduce and transform ensembles of ideas, concepts and categorisations, through which meaning is given to physical and social phenomena (see also Hajer, 1995). Drawing on that tool, I analysed how female Social Organisers mobilise various discourses and establish relationships between different discursive elements when talking about work experiences. As can be seen in the examples presented below, physical and discursive strategies go hand in hand. For analytical reasons, they are discussed separately.

In this paper, my analysis mainly draws on data constructed with the seven female Social Organisers; yet some other people appear in the paper additionally (see Table 1). Statements by male informants are used to illustrate certain issues female Social Organisers are talking about. The female manager appears because she used a discursive strategy that constitutes an interesting alternative to those presented on the basis of conversations with female Social Organisers. I myself, implicated in power structures and being part of the data production, was constructed in various forms by research participants, for example as a white 'Western' woman who is a threat to local gender norms, who is educated and independent, who provides networking opportunities and funding, but also as someone who easily interacts with non-kin men and does not know a lot about Pakistan. The findings reported here are thus to be read as "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988) that was created within a specific discursive space available to my research participants and me during our interactions.

'Social Organisation' as a new occupational field for Pakistani women

The designation 'Social Organiser' [5] is used in the development sector to refer to those development workers who are involved in community organisation and mobilisation, but not in the management of a development organisation. This means that Social Organisers are responsible for selecting villages for development work, travelling to those villages, creating community organisations, registering organisations with a project, (usually) opening a bank account and visiting these 'organised communities' from time to time (Grünenfelder, 2011). Social Organisers forward information from the villagers to higher project staff and vice versa. Their

main task is to mediate between local livelihood realities and project realities, and they thus constitute an important interface between the development apparatus and society (Shahbaz, 2009; Goetz, 1997; Jackson, 1996).

Social Organisation (also called Community Mobilisation) emerged as a formal occupation in Pakistan in the 1980s. The rationale behind this new form of activism was at least twofold (Rasmussen et al, 2007): On the one hand, parts of society were eager to bring change to Pakistan and above all to improve the situation of marginalised individuals (e.g. women) and rural communities (Idrees et al, 2008; Jan & Jan, 2000). Women were needed to reach the female clientele, as this is hardly possible for men in the highly gender-segregated rural areas. On the other hand, previous state-led rural development had focused merely on technical interventions so far and was not likely to succeed in future without social change on the ground, i.e. in villages or communities (Shah, 2009). Additionally, international donors' development agendas supported the emergence of Social Organisation as a new occupational field: Based on discourses on participatory, community-driven and sustainable development, people who formulated development policies and projects were pressurised to include social aspects and focus on local people in their proposals (Rauch, 2009; Oakley, 1991).

The development sector, and Social Organisation in particular, has become a growing work opportunity for parts of Pakistan's female population because of a growing demand for well-educated female employees. It is the highly gender-segregated local society coupled with development agendas' focus on Social Organisation and gender equality that has led to the creation of positions for 'female Social Organisers', i.e. women-only positions. Within this occupational field, men and women are mostly recruited separately for the posts of either male or female Social Organiser (Grünenfelder, 2011), which means that there is no direct competition between men and women for the jobs and a certain amount of jobs are 'reserved' for women only. However, contrary to other professions in which people are recruited gender-specifically (e.g. in the health and teaching sector), Social Organisers have achieved higher formal education – namely, a Bachelor's degree or often even a Master's degree from a University. They represent a group with a generally higher social standing and better chances to access formal work. In contrast, the majority of women in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province have no access to this labour market since they lack adequate education, knowledge and skills (GoP, 2009c).

Challenges faced by female Social Organisers

In interviews and discussions, female Social Organisers portrayed their work in the development sector as sites where they encountered competing expectations towards their behaviour as women and, as an implication, experience diverse challenges related to gender norms. Social Organisation entails tasks that are carried out in the office as well as in the village. Fieldwork is characteristic of Social Organisation and has an especially bad reputation in many parts of Pakistani society, and so has the profession. The following examples illustrate women's challenges in this occupation.

Regarding office work, female Social Organisers talk of gender-specific experiences similar to those illustrated by Mirza for office workers in the city of Lahore (Mirza, 2002, 1999). For example, sexual harassment in offices is a prevalent experience for young working women (Mirza, 2002:44-51; Kamal, 1998), and child-care facilities

are lacking in offices where Social Organisers work. However, there are job-specific issues that are distinct from those described by Mirza (2002) and those explored in other studies with a focus on female professionals in Muslim majority countries (Hutchings et al, 2010; Metcalfe, 2008; Arifeen, 2008a; Ghorbani & Tung, 2007; Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004; Haeri, 2002; Mirza, 2002, 1999; White, 1991). A major challenge mentioned by female Social Organisers is that their work takes place in remote rural areas, in many cases even their office work. This results in practical and ideological challenges. Having offices in remote places means that staff are closer to their clientele, but it also implies that staff may be forced to work comparatively far away from their homes and relatives, and accept longer commuting distances and complicated travel routes. A woman reports:

> "*When I used to go to* [the place where the previous office was], *so the major problem was of transport. It was a local transport and travelling was quite difficult for me. Second, this area* [where I work now] *is near to my house (...)*." (Female Social Organiser, 07.07.2008)

As can be seen in this statement, not only the distance between office and place of residence is challenging, but also the accessibility of the office. Repeatedly it was mentioned that women are not as used to travelling alone as men. Transport is less developed in remote than in central areas, and unlike in Bangladesh (Goetz, 1997), female development workers in Pakistan do not ride motorbikes on their own. Women mentioned that if they have to change buses several times to reach the office and get back home, it not only increases travel time but also their unease with travelling alone. They especially fear sexual harassment. In contrary, men travel by motorbike or by public transport without fearing sexual harassment.

Social Organisers work in so-called "[gender-] mixed working environments" [6], which means that female and male workers have to interact in daily work situations – a highly unorthodox context for many workers in Pakistan. Although both genders, male and female Social Organisers, have to cope with gender-mixed situations, it is particularly challenging for women: Men still mainly occupy jobs in project management and civil service and thus, women need to interact with the other gender more often than men. The gender-mixed work environment distinguishes female Social Organisers from other women who work in rural settings, e.g. female primary school teachers and health workers, who primarily work in gender segregated contexts.

Local people carefully watch the movements and behaviour of women who work in remote offices. In vast parts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, movements of young and unmarried women are highly regulated and strictly controlled. Since female Social Organisers are typically young and unmarried (Grünenfelder, 2011), they are – more than their male colleagues – subject to observations and public moral assessments, which is perceived as a challenging aspect of their work, as is expressed by one of the female Social Organisers:

> "*There is a big difference between working here* [medium-sized town in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa] *and there* [Taxila, Punjab]. *There, people do not so much consider what you wear or where you go, but here you are under constant observation*"

(Female Social Organiser, 24.07.2008)

During fieldwork, even more than during office work, gender segregation can only be maintained up to a limited extent. Female Social Organisers report several practical challenges that make fieldwork difficult for them. (Social) access to villagers, including village women, can only be gained via male key persons from the village. And since – according to prevailing gender norms – a female Social Organiser cannot approach a male person, a female Social Organiser is always dependent on her male colleague to get access to a village and its inhabitants.

Gender norms also have a considerable impact on women's daily time management. The following statement by a local mayor illustrates such a norm:

> "*But take care of just one thing and that is do not stay here after Magrib prayer* [after sunset] *because then we can't take any responsibility if something wrong happens with you people. Because in this area we do not like if ladies move around after sunset.*"
> (Instruction to research team by the male mayor of a Union Council, i.e. a small administrative unit, 06.12.2007)

A big issue for women working as female Social Organisers is the (real and imagined) link of their profession with 'development' and Western interests (Shaheed, 2010; Jafar, 2007; Mumtaz, 2005). Not only in Pakistan, but also around the world, development workers have been attacked both verbally and physically based on arguments that they represent imperialistic gender discourses and endanger local gender values (Toomer, 2011; Naher, 2010). The fact that 'development' is widely perceived as a Western instrument to destabilise traditional gender orders has important consequences for women development workers in the Hazara region. Informants explained that villagers generally have a very negative view of female Social Organisers:

> "[People think that] *if there is a lady working, it will be an NGO.*"
> (Male Social Organiser, 30.06.2008)

The negative view on female Social Organisers is commonly explained with villagers' anecdotes that NGOs have agitated, or beliefs that NGOs could agitate, village women against their men:

> "*Villagers do not like foreigners and NGOs. Villagers think that these people would provoke their women.*"
> (Office boy, Social Organisation office, 23.07.2008)

> "*The problem is that the NGOs have motivated the females against their husbands.*"
> (Male Social Organiser, 23.07.08)

Female Social Organisers, who are seen as an embodiment of NGOs, are thus watched very carefully, and – if necessary – villagers, mainly men and elderly women, can take actions against female Social Organisers and/or the organisation they are working for. For example, a female Social Organiser told that she was

prohibited to visit the village, and I observed how another was hindered from interacting with young village women. Sometimes, objections and threats from local residents force Social Organisers, above all females, to even stop their activities completely. Further, informants tell that some NGOs that run residential establishments for women (called 'girl's hostels') have received threats, and that even some violent incidents have happened in offices where women worked. In threatening letters, unknown senders express their disagreement with women doing "this kind of work" and with NGOs whom they accuse of implementing a "Western agenda". All in all, security concerns put heavy psychological pressure on women staff since they perceive themselves as potential targets of attacks.

In this section, I have shown that female Social Organisers are confronted with a number of challenges that are related to conflicting requirements of their societal and employment contexts. Women are, for example, expected to work in a gender-mixed environment in remote offices and villages in order to perform their duties as development professionals. Yet they are also expected to act as a 'decent Muslim woman' complying with certain conceptions of gender segregation. These expectations are expressions of different gender norms that coexist and compete and are reconstructed and deconstructed in Social Organisers' daily practices. In view of these specificities, it must be assumed that although Social Organisation has become a potential field of employment for well-educated Pakistani women, the women involved need to put a lot of work and energy in reconciling conflicting requirements. In the next two sections, I thus explore how women negotiate gender relations through the use of physical and discursive strategies.

Negotiating gender relations through 'physical strategies'

During office work, female Social Organisers apply some of the same 'physical strategies' like female office workers in Lahore (Mirza, 2002) do. I observed that in Social Organisers' offices there are different office rooms for male and female Social Organisers, that women's rooms are located in the back and in this way hidden from the gazes of men who drop in the office, and that the office doors are kept open to make interactions between men and women visible and demonstrate that 'nothing wrong' happens behind closed doors.

The research participants I spoke to, similar to those in Bangladesh portrayed by Goetz (1997) and Ahmad (2002), expressed that – by working away from the family's radius – they lack the most important conventional protection mechanism: the 'presence' of male relatives. One strategy I observed is that female Social Organisers use the office phone, usually located in the men's room, as a tool to keep in touch with female Social Organisers in other duty stations. Contacts with other female work colleagues are legitimated by their professional links and are socially accepted. Telephone calls do not primarily have the purpose of exchanging specialist knowledge or having private talks: It is a way of keeping in touch with people from outside the office and confirming that everything is going well. This can partly make up for the lacking protection by male family members in the sense that this 'telephone network' provides a certain safety net for the female Social Organisers.

During field work, female Social Organisers largely use (and are dependent on) male team mates for organising field visits and travelling to the villages: On the one hand, it is regarded as the men's duty to handle the administrative parts of the field visit, i.e.

to organise a vehicle or to buy drinks and snacks on the way if needed. On the other hand, it is expected from the women that a man accompany the female Social Organiser while she walks from the vehicle to the village. Walking alone and experiencing physical strain is exertive for female Social Organisers, and is less accepted for women than for men from local society's point of view.

Also security challenges affect women more severely than men. Due to security concerns related to extremist violence, some development organisations pre-emptively closed their women's hostels. Yet, hostels are important for female staff: If hostels are closed, young, unaccompanied female Social Organisers cannot easily and unaccompanied reach the office anymore. Several Social Organisers (not only females) commute for four or more hours a day. Commuting to remote offices poses special challenges for female staff. In urban centres, a common strategy is that a male family member drops the young woman off at her office. Yet it is quite improbable that a remote office is located on the way to another family member's way to work, and this makes it difficult for women to commute together with a male relative. One female Social Organiser who lives in a town neighbouring to the one in which she works is picked and dropped by her unemployed husband at office every day. This female Social Organiser admitted that she does not know what will happen once he gets a job and cannot accompany her to office.

Real violent incidents against NGO offices and staff have led some NGOs to move their offices to areas with a high density of other aid organisations and with security structures such as guards. NGOs that have remained unthreatened moved as well, but not voluntarily:

> "*Now, we are moving our office to* [a specific area where most of the NGO offices are]. *First, we asked the house owner of our current office whether we could rent the upper floor in addition to this one. But he refused and said that some people from the* mohalla [neighbourhood] *had complained with him. He doesn't want to give us the upper storey.*"
> (Female Social Organiser, 24.07.2008)

The author of this statement, who currently lives in the floor above the office in one of the house owner's rooms, explains further that local residents entertain suspicion and antipathy towards development organisations that employ women. Therefore, her organisation – coping with this challenge by applying a physical strategy – moved to another area.

As a reaction to the closure of women's hostels and to gender norms that affect women's time management, Social Organisers further tend to leave villages after field visits at a very early time. Female Social Organisers reported that they go back home before sunset at the latest, since they perceive it as unsafe to travel in darkness. In consequence, this situation leads to another challenge, which is that the time female Social Organisers spend in the field becomes very short. Female Social Organisers may reduce visits to the field to a minimum, especially if they are not compensated with a "per diem" for field days. Similar as in the case of mobility to and from office, there are both practical and ideological reasons (as Goetz (1997:23-24) calls them) that influence and frequently constrain women's mobility to and from villages.

Negotiating gender relations through 'discursive strategies'

Besides being forced to use 'physical strategies' in order to be able to work, female Social Organisers additionally need to discursively establish themselves as legitimate workers. In this section, I use three examples of *language games* to discuss how women negotiate gender relations through discursive strategies by mobilising discourses and joining several discursive elements. I developed the labels for the *language games* during the analysis process, i.e. they are not direct quotations from working women.

Being a modest and decent Muslim woman

Within the *language game* 'being a modest and decent Muslim woman', discourses of gender difference, financial necessity and modesty are mobilised. Many female Social Organisers mention economic needs as the major reason for doing paid work. Some women say that they work because they need money temporarily (e.g. because of a family member's illness or because of male family members' temporary unemployment) or because they have to support the family on a long-term basis (e.g. because the men's income is not sufficient or because the woman does not have any male family members able to finance the family). Economic need is actually the only reason that is widely accepted in society as a justification why a woman is having a job. This logic usually comes from a specific interpretation of Islam; a perspective that is also shared by some of my research participants:

> "*According to Islam, women should stay at home if their needs are covered by their husbands or their brothers*."
> (Female Social Organiser, 01.07.2008)

The argument that a woman is legitimated to work because her family financially depends on income is based on an understanding that men and women have essentially different roles regarding work and this implicates specific actions. In order to make her employment compatible with her religious beliefs, she has to strictly follow other prevailing gender norms to remain 'appropriately feminine'. Following other gender norms can mean that their husbands accompany them on the way to work or that they avoid personal interactions with male teammates.

Concepts of moral corruptness and decency/modesty are joined to the other discursive elements in this *language game*. Several respondents stated that their morality is immediately put into question as soon and as long as they work as Social Organisers. Once, I had a discussion about women and men with one of the female Social Organisers. In the course of the discussion, she said:

> "*There is the prejudice that women who work in offices are* [morally] *corrupt*"
> (Female Social Organiser, 01.07.2008).

In this context, the expression 'corrupt' clearly related to (inappropriate) gender behaviour. Although the female Social Organiser did not elaborate on this sentence (e.g. on the link between office work and moral corruptness), she continued talking about girls' corrupt behaviour in Islamabad's commercial areas: She explained that girls are marketing themselves for sexual satisfaction when they stroll around the shops and glimpse at boys. According to her, it is the way the girls gaze at boys that

makes them corrupt or even morally corrupt [7]. Dissociating herself from morally corrupt women is used to convince other people such as family members, work colleagues or collaborators of her own decency and modesty. I have observed many women illustrating their understanding of moral corruption, modesty and the line between these two on the occasion of everyday events by judging others based on their own understanding. Another time, my female research assistant and I were waiting to interview a male representative of the local administration. We were already sitting in his office and he was completing some tasks when his male office assistant handed him a gift from a woman. Later on, the research assistant commented on that scene. However, she mainly commented on the woman's behaviour and categorised it as morally corrupt even though the male representative accepted the gift and was involved in the interaction as well. In other instances I observed that if another woman gazes at a man or if another woman answers a personal text message from a male work colleague, that woman's behaviour is categorised as 'morally corrupt' and taken as an example for inappropriate behaviour. In this way, compensating an allegedly 'wrong' gender behaviour (having a job) with 'correct' gender behaviour in daily life and in this way establishing a good reputation, serves also as a 'physical strategy' to manage challenges related to competing gender norms.

The 'jungly' others

The *language game* 'the 'jungly' others' combines discourse elements from gender equality, rural-urban dichotomy and education. In contrary to the first example, some women talk of their employment not as a temporary and undesired deviation from applicable local gender norms, but rather as a conscious break with or redefinition of local norms towards more equal gender relations. They differentiate themselves from local people through their education and their urban(-oriented) lifestyle. Educated and urban(-oriented) people are constructed as an opposite to 'jungly' [*jangly* in Urdu; savage] and backward villagers who adhere to outdated gender norms.

Illustrative of this are the following two examples. First, one of the female Social Organisers justifies her employment with a personal interest in the job by saying that she can learn something. It is not anymore a matter of economic necessity only, but also a strategic step in her career. Her knowledge that government posts are occupied in a highly competitive process and that working experience and professional networks become more and more important, motivate her for the job. Employment for her provides not only learning opportunities, but also work experience and professional networks, which are all reasons to endure the challenging job as Social Organiser. This argumentation can even be understood better when one considers her career vision: She wants to become a civil servant as soon as possible. This woman portrays her job as Social Organiser as a transition to something better, i.e. to a job in a protected office environment with a permanent contract and the prospect of a pension and other benefits. She highlights that her attitude towards gender relations differs from villagers' backward and traditional attitudes, even from some of the family members who do not want women to be educated and married women to work outside home:

> Interviewer: "*You are not married?*"
> FSO: "*No*"
> Interviewer: "*Then you can easily work and your family members will help you…*"

FSO: "*Exactly, I faced no problem from my family*"
Interviewer: "*Maybe from near relatives or clan people?*"
FSO: "*Yes, the relatives have objected too much, on the education, the female study… only up to primary section to class 5th and then finish. I am the first person of the village that has studied. But everywhere, there are good and bad people.*" (07.07.2008)

Another example is a Social Organiser's statement that she is motivated to 'develop' people and that society needs to be changed, especially regarding their discriminatory behaviour against women:

"*...local people are very strict in affairs of females, and they do not allow their females to go to offices* (…)
In their mind it is that they don't allow their females outside. They should not go outside. We explain to them that they should receive education and we have to remove wrong ideas from their minds"
(Female Social Organiser, 03.07.2008)

Here as well, the female Social Organiser signals that she does not have the same understanding of gender order as villagers do. She portrays villagers – in regard to gender norms – as 'backward' and 'traditional', whereas she constructs herself as 'modern' and 'open-minded' to dissociate herself from the local 'others'. By drawing on educational status and rural-urban dichotomy, women are able to negotiate gender relations in a way that allows them to legitimise their employment. However, even if women use this 'discursive strategy', they need to apply 'physical strategies' that establish them as good Muslim women vis-à-vis villagers and office mates in order to be able to do their everyday work.

This is my temperament

A contrast and an addition to the *language games* presented above is the *language game* 'this is my temperament', illustrated with examples from interactions with a female manager of a governmental development project. This *language game* draws together elements from gender equality and identity. Similarly to the second *language game*, this one is based on a concept that sees men and women as equal human beings:

"*Nobody compels us* [women] *to stay at home*"

"*If a female has the capacity and if she possesses the guts and if she knows the techniques and if she is well educated, she can pave her path for herself and she will find most cooperative environment. What I feel: It is an impression created by few minds. If she herself is immature and if she does not posses the capacities, that is another question. But if she is talented and if she wants to work – in the real sense of the word –, then the ground is ok* [laughing shyly]. *It is the wrong impression about Pakistan, I would like to say.*"
(female manager of a governmental development project, 22.07.2008)

However, already this quotation shows that the discourse of gender equality is joined with elements from identity discourses. The female manager refers to her character traits in order to legitimise her professional activity:

> "[F]*rom the very beginning my character was like… was controlling things, like an administrator. Even at home, when I was a child, in my absence – later on I came to know – my father used to call me: 'Where is the magistrate* [8]*?'. So when I became a magistrate the people were laughing. I said: 'What has happened? You are laughing…'. They said: 'What your father used to say now proved true'. So this was my temperament*"
> (female manager of a governmental development project, 22.07.2008)

While in 'the 'jungly' others', the outside world, i.e. the underdeveloped people, is used as a legitimising factor, the female manager uses her own character traits to explain why it is 'natural' for her to work. She portrays her job activities (e.g. as magistrate or project manager) as a logic consequence of her temperament. The joining of discursive elements from gender equality and identity allows her to negotiate gender relations in a way that makes it possible for her to engage in formal employment.

Conclusion

This paper explored some of the complexities, diversities and ambiguities in professional Muslim women's lives in the specific socio-cultural context of Pakistan. Even though formal structural constraints on women's employment have been reduced substantially, prevalent gender relations are in many cases disadvantageous to Pakistani women's engagement in formal labour markets. Women are therefore forced to apply physical as well as discursive strategies in order to establish themselves as good workers but also as good Muslim women. In this paper, I have used a case study of female Social Organisers in rural northwest Pakistan to discuss 'physical strategies' and 'discursive strategies' female Muslim development workers draw on in order to negotiate gender relations in a way that enables them to engage in formal employment relations in the development sector. The attention paid to both physical and discursive strategies provides new findings that add to previous research on Pakistani working women's strategies to reconcile employment and modesty (Syed, 2010, 2008; Syed and Ali, 2006; Mirza, 2002, 1999; Goetz, 1997; Weiss, 1984; Papanek, 1971).

The findings reported here illustrate female Social Organisers' experiences with heterogeneous discourses on gender relations that complicate their working life but, also provide them an opportunity to negotiate gender relations. Since women workers are implicated in diverse relations of power, such as class relations and rural-urban relations, they draw on diverse physical and discursive strategies and combine them flexibly. Depending on how these strategies are combined, they may serve to stabilize or rather destabilize dominant conceptualisations of gender as unequal social relations. Thus, the findings presented in this paper are basically supportive of Ruth Pearson's argument that "[w]*omen's participation in the money economy* (…) *is not on its own going to achieve women's equality or empowerment*" (2004:119). However, since engaging in the labour market *per se* is a highly unusual behaviour for many Pakistani women, Pakistani women's engagement in the market economy often increases (men and women's) options to negotiate gender relations, be it consciously or unconsciously.

With its analysis, the paper raises wider issues related to intersections between discourses of gender, work and globalisation. Globalised discourses on gender relations play an important role in defining and fostering gender equality at work (Metcalfe and Rees, 2010, Sweetman, 2009; Acker, 2004). The present paper contributes to a better understanding of the gendered effects of globalisation in formal employment contexts as called for by Metcalfe and Rees (2010), Walby (2009) and Acker (2004) by directing attention to the development sector as a work environment that is shaped not only by local gender norms, but also by globalised discourses on gender equality. Recalling the forecast that many South Asian women will enter the labour market in the near future, this paper's findings suggest to be more reserved above all in regarding women's continuance in the labour market: the ways in which women are able to manage controversial discourses of gender relations will have a crucial impact on how long they stay in the labour market.

The insights on women's gendered experiences in the development sector of rural northwest Pakistan further contribute to the literature on critical development studies and gender. The development sector (together with humanitarian aid) has become a key site where diverse actors struggle for interpretive power over gender relations (Cornwall et al, 2007). However, mainstream literature on development has largely ignored the experiences of those doing development work (see Hindman and Fechter, 2011). Women in Pakistan and other Muslim majority countries work as development practitioners under the pretext of encouraging social change. This 'social change' is most often defined by discourses and organisations shaped in the North and in non-Muslim contexts, which provokes ambivalent feelings in development workers as well as in other members of the respective society. Numerous newspaper reports tell of women development workers in Pakistan who are threatened on the basis of their jobs (e.g. DAWN, 2010, 2009a, 2009b, 2008a, 2008b, 2006; OhmyNews, 2007; Daily Times, 2006; PakTribune, 2006). Building on this evidence, there is a need to ensure that development is not being contested at the expense of women's employment and wider opportunities, neither in Pakistan nor elsewhere.

Endnotes

[1] With this term, I deliberately allude to Mohanty's critique (1988) of the homogenisation of 'Third World women', especially by Western feminists.

[2] Within South Asia, Pakistan had the lowest economic activity rate of women between 1980-2000 (Basu & Maertens, 2009:107).

[3] Female Social Organisers constitute a social category that entails a multitude of intersections in their full complexities: Female Social Organisers represent categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, age, progress and many more. Besides gender, class plays another crucial role at the interface between villagers and Social Organisers. An analysis of intersections of gender, class and other identities would need another conceptual approach such as an intersectionality approach. However, such an analysis goes beyond the scope of this paper that aims looking at how working women engage with gender norms.

[4] The institution of *Purdah* – which is related to Islamic values and designates a broad set of behaviour patterns rather than a fixed set of rules – is a way of dealing with gender order at a societal level by separating the sexes (Mirza, 2002).

[5] I use 'Social Organiser' and 'female Social Organiser' as generic terms because they are widely used in the development sector in Pakistan and elsewhere. However, I also refer to people who are hired under designations such as 'community organisers', 'social mobilisers' and 'village workers' (see Grünenfelder, 2011 for an analysis of job announcements and profiles of employed Social Organisers).

[6] 'Mixed environment' is a common expression used to describe settings where non-kin men and women have to interact with each other. The term 'mixed' however, is not explicitly related to gender in everyday language.

[7] Mirza (2002:139-143) shows that people frequently include allusions to sexual misbehaviour when talking about female office workers' conduct in the city of Lahore. By doing this, they construct those women as "morally corrupt". Khan (2003:78) – more generally speaking – says that immorality in Pakistan almost invariably means sexual misbehaviour. Interestingly, with men, the expression 'corrupt' is rather used when men are suspected to be involved in nepotism (also specified as political corruptness) or to misbehave in financial matters (also specified as economic corruption), but it is hardly ever used in combination with men's inappropriate gender behaviour.

[8] Magistrates controlled executive, judicial and revenue functions in the District until a devolution policy was introduced under Musharraf in 2001 (ICG, 2010:8).

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